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Duquesne University:

THE STORY OF EUGENE DEBS

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IN PREPARATION

The Story of SOCRATES

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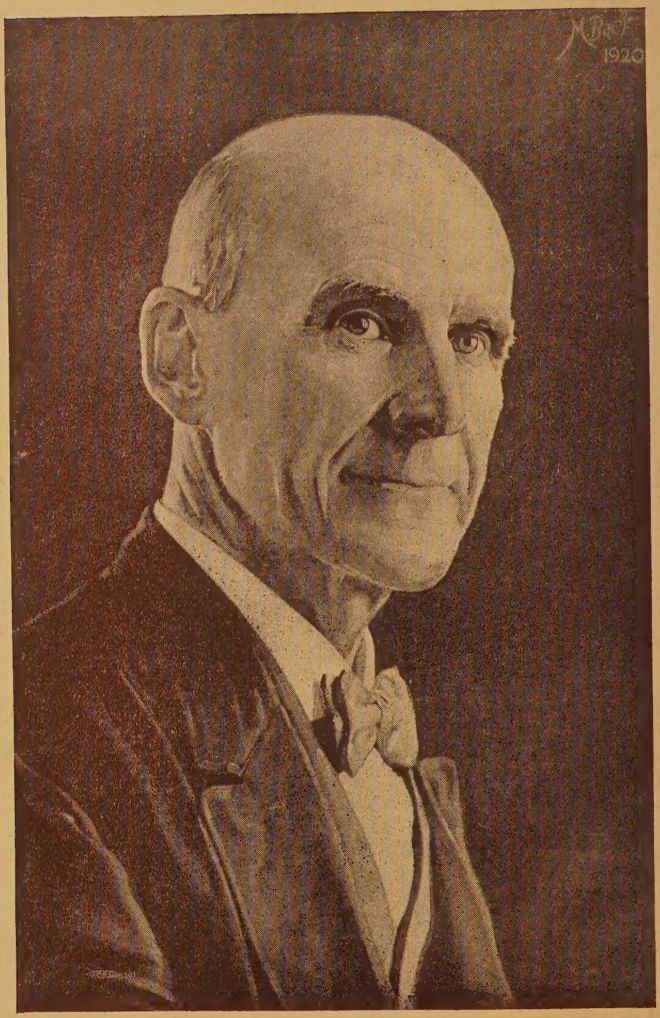

GENE DEBS IN 1920
FROM THE PORTRAIT BY BAER

HEROES OF PEACE & LIBERTY
BOOK ONE

The Story of EUGENE DEBS

By
HENRY T. SCHNITTKIND
[UNCLE HENRY]

With an Introduction by
ROMAIN ROLLAND

BOSTON 1929
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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO MY LITTLE SON

DANA

AND TO ALL OTHER CHILDREN EVERYWHERE
IN WHOSE DEAR BRAVE HANDS LIES THE MAKING
OF A NEW AND BETTER WORLD

APR 7 '31
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"And there's Gene Debs, a man that stands
And jest holds out in his two hands
As warm a heart as ever beat
Betwixt here and the Judgment seat."

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Foreword

THIS BOOK is intended to be the first in a series of biographies of the heroes of peace. It is my intention to bring before the minds of the children of the world a new set of human values. Their education thus far has been based on militarism and on the exploitation of the weak by the strong. By means of these biographies I hope, in my humble way, to begin to build a foundation for a new type of education,— an education based upon peace and upon the mutual cooperation of the citizens of all the nations toward the building of a better world.

My thanks are due to Mr. Theodore Debs for his kindness in supplying me with documents, photographs and various items of information that were a great help in the preparation of this book; to M. Romain Rolland for his exquisitely beautiful introduction; and to the Independent Workmens Circle for their enthusiastic co-operation in my plan to attempt this new type of biography for children. The Independent Workmens Circle, it must be understood, is not a publishing company, but a fraternal insurance and educational society, whose fundamental principle,

like that of our hero in this book, is the betterment of the lot of our working people, and the intellectual uplift and social and economic independence of those who create all of the world's mental and material wealth.

H.T.S.

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Introduction

By Romain Rolland

The Supreme Energy—The Energy of Peace and Love

In the beginning, there is Energy . . .

It is the sun of life. It is the first of the virtues. It is that which has launched the worlds in space, thrown upon the ocean of the night the network of the stars and their luminous trail, and organized chaos. It is that which reawakens the old earth in the springtime, which swells the veins of the trees and makes the sap to rise within them. It is that which puts into our hearts the divine thirst of life, of love, of thought and action. Without it, all would be nothing. . . Hail to Energy! To thee, our first and foremost song!

My children, be brave! Remember that the mark of a true man, of a true woman, is courage! Shame is cowardice, either of the body or of the soul; it is the fear to will, the fear to risk, the weakness of a mean and ignoble spirit. . . Know how to nourish and to

develop within you every Energy! — But know, too, how to distinguish those energies which are the highest and the most difficult, and therefore the most glorious and the most worthy of a true man! And if not all of you have been given the power to attain them, you can and you *must* at least aspire after them. Let them be to you like mountain-tops in the sunlight, toward which all life is a difficult, a dangerous, a splendid ascent.

The divine Energy which fills the universe is a stairway of light. It rises, step by step, from the blind force of matter, of brutality, of the elementary laws which cause the stone to fall and the light to burst forth, — all the way up to the sublime torch of the human heart and of reason.

This divine Energy has, even within the heart of man, a hierarchy of stages, rising all the way from love of self, which is necessary in the world, since every being must love himself in order to defend his life, to cultivate his gifts, and to play in a worthy manner the part which has been assigned to him, — until it finally develops into the immense love of all living creatures, a love which embraces them all and dedicates itself to their happiness, for it recognizes that they are all of them related, brothers of the same

flesh and blood, — just as Schiller and Beethoven have sung, in the magnificent *Ode to Joy*:

"Seid umschlungen, Millionen! Diesen Kuss der ganzen welt!"

"Embrace, ye millions! One kiss I fling to the entire world!"

My children, we want all the healthy energies to flourish within you; let none of them be stifled, for they are all of them rays of the great sun of life. But we want all the energies to be united in the service of the highest. One must always aim after the highest, if one is to be a true man. A true man is never content with less! . .

We present to you, in these books, the highest,— the very summits of human Energy.

Your teachers have often — too often — spoken to you about the heroes of brutal force and of domineering character: of the Napoleons of the world. We do not ignore their tremendous will-power. It is the lion ruling in the jungle. The lion, king of the deserts. But if this glory is perhaps the highest possible in the world of carnivorous beasts, it is a poor sort of glory indeed in the world of men, for they have received from heaven the flame of liberty and the torch of reason.

Your teachers have often — too often — spoken to you of the heroes of war who have sacrificed themselves to the great divinities of the Tribe, of the City, and of the Nation. We bow down piously before their open graves and the sorrow of those who loved them. But we cannot forget that these self-sacrifices, which the country demands, are at the same time the murders of those who are called "the enemy", but who in reality are our brothers; we cannot forget that the grief of those that mourn is not confined to one side only, and that those who shed tears for our soldiers are also responsible for the crimes which cause the tears to flow on the other side. We cannot forget that these wars of the nations are the struggles of brothers, in which the self-same human blood gushes forth in a single stream. And history teaches us that conquerors and conquered alike are conquered; for these hecatombs, which the unheard of progress in the technique of slaughter makes ever more inhuman, are forever swallowing up the treasures of youth, of strength, of genius, of toil and of money which ought to have been used in the up-building of a greater future. This warlike heroism belongs to a period in human history which had a right to exist in those days when the different races were still in their prim-

itive stage of evolution, when it was necessary for the highest race to defend its existence against the menace of barbarism. This stage is past now; for today the world belongs to a number of great races all of which are almost equal in genius, and all of which are equally indispensable, for each of them would not be complete without the others. When they engage in war, they ruin humanity, which has need of them all and of their undivided strength.

But the masses of the people are blind flocks who allow themselves to be driven on by old habits and by inherited and baleful instincts,—men and women who have not the time nor the energy to think for themselves. Like the sheep of Panurge, in the humorous tale of Rabelais, they would continue to leap, until the very last one, into the abyss, just because those who marched in front have leaped into it. In order to stop them, we must employ superhuman power. We must have heroes who are not afraid to stand in the face of public opinion, at the risk of being crushed under the heel of the thoughtless mob which has, at all times, abused and persecuted its best and its wisest friends. Here you have the highest and the purest of all sacrifices. For it is very easy to rush to your death when you are carried away by the en-

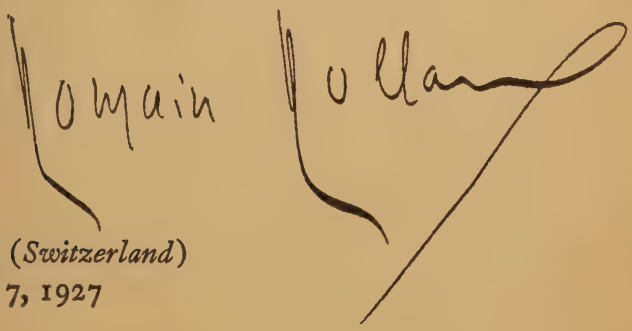
thusiasm of a whole people, by an overwhelming current of opinion, — as is the case in national wars, where each soldier is a drop of water swept along by the torrent. But the greatest sacrifice, the supreme Energy of all, is the heroism of the man who, standing alone and seeing that his nation is deceiving itself, or rather, that it is being deceived and is hastening on to its ruin, places himself across their path and cries:—

"Brothers, stop! That way is the way of death, and worse than death, it is the way of crime! The ruin of our races awaits us at the end. The ruin of our ideals. The ruin of humanity. Before you can do that, you will have to pass over my dead body..."

How many of these heroes have already been crushed under the savage trampling of these furious sheep; whose red hatred has blinded their vision! How many of them are going to be crushed yet!... But it is their sacrifice which shall at last succeed in saving humanity!

Children! — My children of America, who are my little brothers, whom I love as tenderly as my little brothers of Europe, for I am just as anxious as those who are nearest and dearest to you to see you great and happy!—You are now going to read about

some of these great Friends of men, who have devoted their entire life, even unto death, to the service of humanity, to your service, my children! We do not ask you to become like them. It is too high, too difficult a task, and only a few are equal to it! — But we do ask you to recognize them, to worship them, and to build, within your heart, a small secret altar where you will always keep alive the flame of love and of gratitude for these eternal Prometheuses, the liberators and the crucified saviors of men.



Villeneuve (Switzerland)
November 7, 1927

1

The Child Who Never Grew Up

ONCE UPON A TIME there lived a man who all his life remained a child. He lived to be over seventy years old, and yet he never outgrew the beautiful dreams of his childhood. He watched the grown-ups about him playing all kinds of foolish games, and he wasn't the least bit interested in these games. He saw them playing the game of *Business*, and he noticed that instead of helping one another and having a jolly good time together, they were only cheating one another and having a miserable time over it. He saw them playing the game of *War*, and it seemed to him that they had all gone crazy. What earthly fun could they get out of slashing and whacking and killing one another, when all of them were anxious to live and enjoy themselves? He saw them playing the game of *Patriotism*, and he was more surprised than ever. Patriotism wasn't a bad game, to be sure, but the people just didn't know how to play

it. They thought that the only way to be a patriot was to hate everybody whose name had a queer sound, or whose nose was a little longer or a little shorter than your own nose, or whose skin was a little darker or a little lighter than your own skin. The grown-ups called all these strange people *foreigners*, and they not only hated them, but they did all kinds of mean things to them and sometimes even killed them. They didn't know, these foolish grown-ups, that the whole world is one country, and that the only way to be a true patriot is to love all the people of this great country which is the world.

And so this man looked at the silly games of the grown-ups, and he decided that he would have nothing to do with them. Instead, he began to watch the children at their play. And he was surprised to see that the children were often much more sensible than their parents. The children didn't know how to cheat, or to kill each other, or to be mean to little foreign boys and girls, until they learned these foolish habits from their elders. And then, too, they understood a good many things that their parents had no idea of. The parents lived in a rather stupid and ugly world, but the children lived in a world that was constantly full of the most wonderful surprises.

Every tree was a living giant with a shaggy head of green hair. Every violet was a beautiful blue princess, enchanted by some wicked ogre and condemned to stick forever with its dainty little body rooted in the ground. Pansies were sleeping butterflies, and butterflies were pansies flying through the air. And all these flowers grew not only on earth, but in heaven, too. A falling star, for instance, was the blue-white petal of an angel-flower. The wind had blown it out of some garden in the sky and was carrying it down for some child to play with. A child who was dying, perhaps, and who wanted a pretty toy with which to amuse himself in his last few moments before he fell asleep.

These were all very silly ideas, thought the grown-ups. But the children knew better. And so they kept on thinking these thoughts and playing these games, and the man that I am telling you about, the man who never grew old, always liked to watch them at their play. To the children, he noticed, almost everything was a living flower. And as he watched them, he began to realize that the children themselves were flowers, too. Little singing flowers running about in pantaloons and petticoats. Negro children, he noticed, are flowers with black

petals. Chinese children are flowers whose petals are yellow. American and European children are lilies, with petals of white. But all of them are equally beautiful.

And the man, seeing this, decided that to the end of his days he would try to be like one of these children. His body grew big and strong, his mind grew powerful and wise, but his heart remained forever pure, like the heart of a child.

The name of this man was Gene Debs.

2

The World Is A Toy

GENE DEBS was born in Terre Haute, Indiana. *Terre Haute* is a French name, and it means *High Land*. At first it was settled by the French, who were foreigners. All the white people in America were at that time foreigners. Nowadays we pass foolish laws to keep Italians and Russians and Jews and other foreign people away from our country, but we forget that all of us who live in America are the children of foreigners, unless we happen to be red Indians. For the Indians are the only true Americans that we have in this country.

Gene's parents were both born in France, and when Gene was a little fellow his father used to tell him all kinds of interesting stories about the men and the women who lived in his native country. In this way Gene learned that there are lovable people not only in America, but in all other countries, too.

His full name was Eugene Victor Debs. But he preferred to be called plain *Gene*. And he also liked to call everybody else by a simple name. His father

he called *Dandy*, for this man was certainly the dandiest father that ever was. And his mother he called *Daisy*, for wasn't she a real daisy, like every other blessed mother on the face of the earth?

Gene loved his parents, especially his mother. What wonderful stories she used to tell him! Right out of her head, too! She didn't have to read them in books. She would just look at a thing and make up all kinds of fairy tales about it. "Look at the grass, my little Gene," she would say to him. "Do you know what it is?" And when Gene said that he didn't know what the grass was, she would go on with her story. "The grass is God's handkerchief. One day, when God had just finished making the world, he saw a little boy playing on a precipice. 'Careful, sonny!' he cried. 'You're liable to fall over the precipice and get killed!' But the little fellow was chasing a butterfly and so he didn't hear what God was saying to him. The butterfly flew over the precipice, and the little boy jumped right after it. He fell to the bottom of the mountain, and his body got crushed to death."

"Go on with your story," said Gene, who felt very sorry for the child.

"And when God saw how the little boy was killed,

he took pity on him, and began to cry. And he kept on crying until his tears made oceans and lakes and rivers all over the world. But when he wanted to stop crying, he had nothing to wipe his eyes with. He was very much frightened. For if he kept on crying like that, the whole world would be drowned in one big ocean. He therefore decided to make himself a handkerchief of green grass. And when the handkerchief was made, he stooped down and wiped his tears on it. That is why, when you get up early in the morning, you find dew drops on the grass. These dew drops are the tears that God has left on his handkerchief after he has dried his eyes with it."

"But why did God make all these precipices and butterflies and little boys to chase them?" asked Gene.

"God made the whole earth, with everything in it," replied his mother, "because he wanted to have a pretty toy to play with."

"It must be great fun for God to be playing with the earth," thought Gene. He must be playing a game of marbles with it. Every morning he takes it between his finger and his big thumb, and sends it spinning like a marble through the sky. Gene, too, liked to play marbles. He was the best marble player

on his street. He won so many aggies and glassies and alleys that his pockets were always bulging with them. He wondered whether God's pockets, too, were bulging with the stars and the planets that lay scattered at night like millions of marbles all over the sky. There were so many of them! All you had to do was to stretch out your hand and shove them into your pocket by the hundreds. Gee, but it was great fun to be God and to be able to live up in the sky!

And so the whole earth was a big toy that God liked to play with! If that was the case, thought little Gene, then all the people on the earth, and the birds and the snakes and the elephants and all the other live things, were little playthings that God made out of clay. But why in the world did he make so many imperfect ones? Right around the corner from Gene's house lived a man with one leg. Didn't God have enough clay to give him another leg? What was the fun of making the poor fellow lame? There was one little girl in Gene's school who was a hunchback. Why didn't God smooth out the clay with his fingers, so that her back might be straight instead of crooked? It certainly did seem that God was careless at times, didn't it? And sometimes God would take the trouble

to make a perfect little baby, with eyes that danced like stars, and with dimples in its cheeks that looked like fairy drinking cups. And having gone to all that trouble, he would suddenly change his mind and kill the little baby before it could even begin to walk or talk. What was the fun of that?

God seemed to be a bit too rough in his playing at times. Only yesterday a baby boy had died right next door to Gene. Such a pretty little fellow that he was! Gene had often played with him as he lay in his carriage on the sidewalk. He used to snatch at Gene's nose with his little pink fingers, and then he tried with all his might to tear the nose away from Gene's face. It hurt like *everything*, but Gene didn't mind it in the least. It was great sport playing with the baby. Gene wouldn't have spoiled his fun for anything in the world.

And now God had gone to work and killed him! God did like to play too roughly at times, didn't he?

"Shame on you, dear God!" thought Gene. "Why did you do it? Don't you know you can have just as much fun playing gently with us?"

Gene was sitting on his doorstep and thinking about the dead baby. God had taken it away and hidden it somewhere. And suddenly, as Gene was think-

ing about these things, an idea came out of nowhere and struck terror into his heart. What if God should take it into his head and hide *him* away somewhere, too? So that his mother would never be able to find him again? There was a queer feeling in the air that somebody was looking straight at you. After all, Gene was nothing but a little bit of a toy that God had made out of clay. Perhaps God was now sick of the silly toy whose name was Gene Debs. Perhaps he wanted to break it up and make other toys out of his clay. Whew, what a horrible thought! He jumped up from the doorstep and ran crying to his mother.

"Daisy," he exclaimed, "tell me why does God ever want to take away children from their parents?"

"He wants to take them out of harm's way, my little Gene," said his mother. "For God is a beautiful king, and we are all his children, and he loves us. Look at all the pretty things he has given us to play with. The trees, and the stars, and the birds, and the lilacs, and the wide rivers that go dancing down to the sea."

"If God is a king," said Gene, "then all of us are princes, are we not?"

"Of course we are," said his mother. "Every one

of us, whether rich or poor, is either a prince or a princess."

"Even the man with the one leg, and the little girl with the hunchback?" asked Gene.

"Yes," said his mother, "even they."

And sure enough, when he came to think of it, he realized that his mother was right. Everybody you talked to, even if he *was* sick or crippled, knew way down the bottom of his heart that he was a great prince. People didn't often admit it, you know, but they always felt it just the same. At least *Gene* felt it. *He* was a real prince, even though he ran about the streets with a dirty little face and bare feet. In the daytime the sun threw a crown of golden light over his head, and the grass was spread like a royal carpet for his feet to dance upon. What prince living in a palace had greater sport than that? And at night, as he sat on the throne of his doorstep, the little invisible pixies were his pages. They fanned him with the West Wind. They entertained him with an orchestra of a thousand meadow-larks and ten thousand insects. They sprinkled over him the perfumes of honeysuckle and wild roses. And at last, when he was tired with all this glorious fun, they carried him away

on the downy wings of sleep into the land of a thousand dreams.

Could any prince on earth ask for more? And the fun of it was that not only Gene, but *everybody else*, had the sun and the grass and the pixies and the winds to play with. That's what made every one of them a real prince. Those that lived in palaces were only the *make-believe* sons and daughters of kings. They wore golden buckles that were not half so beautiful as the gold of the sun, and all kinds of expensive medals that were not nearly one tenth as pretty as the medal of a daisy stuck into the torn shirt of a peasant boy. It was only when they forgot their silly ornaments of gold and precious stones that the make-believe princes who lived in palaces became *true* princes, like Gene Debs and like all the other children of the world.

3

Johnny Haines and The Pigeons

YES, EVERYBODY in the world was a prince! So, at least, it seemed to Gene. For, you see, he was still a very small boy and he had not yet learned that grown-ups divide themselves into rich man, poor man, beggar man, and thief, and doctor, and lawyer, and a thousand other silly distinctions of that kind. Even the sick children and the stupid ones, he noticed, were royal fellows if you only took the trouble to know them real well. Right across the street from Gene lived Johnny Haines. He was a sickly chap, and the queerest looking thing you ever laid your eyes on. God must have copied him out of a funny picture which he saw in the Sunday newspapers. For his arms and legs were all twisted, and his body looked like the trunk of a crooked apple tree. And his mind, too, seemed to be crippled just like his body. He never did understand what you were saying to him. Instead of answering your ques-

tions, he would merely grin at you, and point up with his crooked finger, and say, "See? Ain't the sky pitty?" The kids who lived on the street always made fun of him. They stuck out their tongues at him and cried, "Johnny Haines ain't got no brains! Johnny Haines ain't got no brains!" But Johnny, instead of getting angry at them, would only grin and point to the sky, and repeat again and again, "See? Ain't the sky pitty?"

Whenever Gene saw this ugly and stupid little fellow, he used to say to himself, "*He* is no prince. He is just a plain idiot." He pitied him, to be sure, but he saw no earthly reason why God should have made him.

But one day he saw him in the Park. Johnny Haines was sitting on the grass, with hundreds of pigeons dancing about him on their little red feet. He was feeding them with peanuts out of his own mouth. One by one the pigeons fluttered up to him, hopped on his shoulder, and with their slender bills picked a piece of nut-meat out of Johnny's open mouth. "Thank you!" purred each pigeon as she hopped down again from his shoulder, and Johnny Haines smiled and invited the next pigeon to the glorious feast.

So Johnny, too, was a prince, thought Gene. The people who lived on Johnny's street would never have guessed it. But Gene and the birds knew!

4

Little Gene and The Civil War

GENE was growing older, and he began to notice that people were not at all treating one another like princes. It was in 1863, and he was just eight years old. Every day he saw soldiers marching through the streets of Terre Haute. They were going to fight in the Civil War. His mother told him that a great many of them were made to go against their will. That was a stupid way to treat a prince, wasn't it? To make him kill other people when he didn't want to! And sometimes he saw the soldiers coming back from the battlefield. Some of them came back with only one leg. Some with only one arm. And some with both legs and arms shot away. They had to be carried on stretchers, and they would never again be able to hold a child on their knee or caress its little smooth face with their fingers. Grown-ups must be crazy to make wars, thought Gene. Children would never dream of being so savage to one another!

And not only that, but the grown-ups seemed to be telling all sorts of lies about the enemy. Gene's teacher in school said to him, and to the other children, too, that all the Southerners were wicked ogres who wanted to eat up little boys and girls. There wasn't a single good man or woman among them, she said.

"But what about the *children* who live in the South?" asked Gene. "Are *they* wicked ogres, too?"

"No," said his teacher. "But they're going to be, when they grow up."

Gene couldn't for the life of him understand this. Right around the corner from his own house there lived a Southern family. They had come to Terre Haute only a few years ago. The father was one of the kindest men in the world. *He* would never eat up little children. Instead, he always liked to play with them. His pockets were forever full of nuts and candy which he distributed among the kiddies. And the mother, too, was just as nice as the father. But now everybody avoided them. For they belonged to the enemy. According to his teacher, this man and his wife were no longer to be trusted. They had been changed from human beings into ogres the moment war was declared in 1861.

Gene asked his mother about it. For he couldn't understand it. "Tell me, mother," he said, "is it true that our enemies are all wicked? Is it our duty to kill them?"

"No, Gene dear," said his mother. " Our enemies are God's children, just like ourselves."

"Then why does our teacher tell us all those terrible things about them?"

"Because in time of war," said his mother, "most people lose their senses. Their minds get sick and they don't know what they're talking about."

"Well, *I'm* not going to lose *my* senses in time of war when *I* grow up!" cried Gene, and his eyes flamed like two little blazing suns.

"Of course you're not!" said his mother, smiling and kissing him on the forehead. "But let's hope there'll be no war when you grow up."

"There *wouldn't* be any war if I can help it!" exclaimed Gene. "I'm not a-going ever to kill any of God's children, no matter who tells me! And I'll tell everybody else to do as I do!"

"That's the way to talk, sonny!" said his father who just at that moment had come into the room. "You've got the stuff that real heroes are made of!"

5

Gene's Friend Takes a Trip to the Moon

THE CIVIL WAR was over at last, and people once more came to their senses. The North and the South shook hands, they apologized for having killed so many of the strongest and the most beautiful of the young men in the country, and everything was all right again. Everybody was happy, except the young fellows that had been killed in the war. Everybody was celebrating the end of the fighting, and they made speeches all over the country in honor of the brave soldiers who had died for their flag. But the brave soldiers were dead, and they couldn't get up out of the cemetery to hear the beautiful speeches that were being made in their honor. And so the speeches didn't interest them in the least.

Gene thought it very silly for old people to send young people to their death, and to make up a great speech about them afterwards. But, then, Gene was only nine years old, and so he kept his thoughts to

himself. It wouldn't do to tell grown-ups what you thought of them. They were so much bigger and stronger than you. They might get angry and give you a good spanking.

But he kept his eyes open, and every day he learned more and more about the world. And the more he learned, the more he was surprised. He had a chum in school whom he liked very much. The name of this chum was Billy Magoun. Billy was a queer chap. His cheeks were two pink apples, his nose was like a white marble stuck on the middle of his face, and his lips were like the silk petals of a wild rose. And he was as mischievous as a fire-cracker on the fourth of July. He never could stand still for a moment. When his hands and his feet rested, his tongue began to prattle away like an impetuous mountain brook. And when his tongue rested, his hands and his feet immediately got into motion. But most of the time his hands and his feet and his tongue kept whirling along all together, and chuckle after chuckle of delight kept bubbling up out of his merry little heart.

Billy was a great story teller. He had a wonderful imagination. He told the other children that the strangest things in the world happened to him at

night. "Do you know," he said one day, "that I had a trip to the moon last night?"

"Go tell it to the marines!" said the other kids. "You don't expect *us* to believe it, do you?"

"But I did!" insisted Billy Magoun. "Let me tell you how it happened. Last night, when everybody fell asleep, somebody tickled me under the chin and said, 'Get up, Billy Magoun!' "

"It must have been a beetle or a lady-bug," said Paul Sprague, one of the boys who was listening to the story.

"Oh, no, it wasn't," retorted Billy Magoun. "It was a little black man with fiery eyes and a white beard. He was no bigger than my thumb, and he said he lived up in the moon. 'Would you like to take a trip to my country?' he said to me. 'You bet I would!' I answered, and I jumped right up out of bed.

" 'S-s-s-sh!' whispered the little man in my ear. 'Don't make any noise, or you'll wake up your parents!'

"I kept as still as a feather. I dressed myself in a jiffy, and I was all ready to go.

"But the door was locked and I couldn't find the key. And how do you think I got out?"

When Billy asked this question, all the other children tried to guess just how he did get out.

"Through the window!" said Paul Sprague.

"Through the key-hole" laughed Gene.

"Up through the chimney!" said one of the other boys.

"No sir!" replied Billy Magoun. "You're all wrong. I flew right through the ceiling."

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Paul Sprague.

"You don't have to believe it if you don't want to. But I tell you I did go right through the ceiling."

"Didn't you bump your head?" asked Gene.

"No," said Billy. "The ceiling opened up like a cloud to let me through, and then it grew together again."

"And what happened afterwards?" asked Gene.

"The little black Man of the Moon," said Billy Magoun, "called a big oak tree to him, and when the oak tree came. . . "

"Do you mean to tell us," said Paul Sprague, "that an oak tree walked up to the Man of the Moon?"

"Sure!" said Billy. "Don't you know that trees wake up when people go to sleep? All sorts of things wake up at night. The winds and the rivers and the flowers and the little gnomes and leprechauns who

hide themselves away from everybody in the daytime. The air is just full of them at night. You ought to see the pine trees waltzing with the pixies all over the park! I see them almost every night. . . But please don't interrupt me any more with your silly questions. I want to tell you how I got to the moon last night."

"All right," said the other boys, "we won't ask you any more questions."

"Well, then, I'll go on with my story," said Billy. "When the Man who lived in the Moon called the oak tree to him, he said, 'Please, Mr. Tree, can you spare the time to take Billy Magoun and myself up to the moon?

" 'Sure!' said the tree. 'Jump right up!'

"The little black Man of the Moon tucked me in tight between two branches, and then he sat down beside me, and away we sailed right up through the air! Before I could catch my breath we were so far away that the earth seemed no bigger than a green apple. Gee, but we must have looked funny! The two of us perched like little birds in the branches, and the whole tree flying like a big green kite through the air, with its trunk stretched out like a tail behind it! We flew past a bunch of stars that grew on a grape-

vine up in the sky. I plucked one of the stars and ate it. Um-m-m-m, but didn't it taste delicious! Once we cut right through the tail of a comet. It was all on fire, and my hair got singed as we passed through it. You can even smell the burnt hair now if you want to. Try it and see!"

He stuck his head under the nose of each one of the boys in turn. But the boys said that they couldn't smell any burnt hair. "That's because your noses don't know their business!" said Billy, and went on with his story.

"At last," he said, "we came to heaven. That's where the angels live, you know, and the dead people, too. I saw my grandma there. She asked me how I was and she gave me a cooky. She was baking a whole lot of them for the little angels who were going to have a birthday party. She asked me about mama. But I had no time to stop and tell her, for the tree was flying straight ahead all the time.

"And soon we came to a big baseball field in the sky. The angels were playing baseball with the little dead children. The ball they played with was a big star. The angels were ahead. But in the ninth inning one of the children, a little freckled soul with yellow hair, knocked a home run and the children won the

game. But he hit the star so hard that it became lop-sided, and it kept rolling down the heavens like a lame duck. I think we could see it even now if we had a telescope with us."

"But did you ever reach the moon?" asked Paul.

"You bet we did!"

"Tell us what the moon looks like," said Gene.

"It's the funniest place you ever saw," replied Billy. "Everything in the moon is topsy turvy. The trees grow with their leaves stuck in the ground and with their roots up in the air. And they blossom in December instead of in May. And the blossoms are not flowers, but little snowflakes. And the snowflakes in the moon are not at all like our snowflakes, but they are pink instead of white. And would you believe it, all the colors in the moon are topsy turvy. The ground is blue and the sky is green. And the sun shines at night and the stars come out in the daytime. And you see the queerest things happening there all the time. The turtles and the frogs live up in the air, and the birds swim under the water. And the fishes catch little boys and girls with hooks, and the animals catch big men and women with traps and guns and put them in cages."

"Weren't you afraid they'd catch you on a hook, too?" asked Paul Sprague.

"Oh, no!" answered Billy. "They don't bother the children that come from the earth. They're afraid of them."

"I see," said Paul. "Go on with the story, please."

"Tell us something about the people that live there," said Gene.

"The people in the moon," said Billy Magoun, "are even funnier than the trees and the birds and the fishes. They're very big when they are born, and instead of growing *up* all the time, they keep on growing *down*. The older they grow, the smaller they get. When they're very very old, they get so tiny that at last they disappear altogether. And that's how they die. But now I'm going to tell you something that will make you laugh even more than ever. The children up in the moon always spank their parents when the parents are bad!"

"Gee!" cried Paul Sprague. "I wish *I* lived in the moon!"

Billy Magoun paid no attention to Paul, but went on with his story. "The children up in the moon," he said, "stay at home, and the parents have to go to school. For the older the parents grow, the

more stupid they become. If they didn't go to school, they wouldn't know how to talk to their own children. And did I tell you that the people up in the moon walk on their hands and comb their hair with their feet? Yes, sir, that's how they live up there! But the funniest thing of all is the way they fight battles up in the moon. The old men are sent away to war, and the young men stay home to make speeches. And when they get to the battlefield, they don't shoot at each other the way they do in America and in Europe. Instead, each one tries to shoot *himself*. And the side that has the biggest number of people who kill themselves is the side that wins the war."

"I'm glad *I'm* not in the moon!" said Paul. "*I* wouldn't like to kill myself."

"Then you wouldn't be a patriot," said Billy, "and they'd kill you anyway."

"But tell me," asked Gene. "How did you happen to notice so many things all in one night?"

"Why, that's easy!" answered Billy. "Every single night up in the moon is a hundred years long."

"If that is the case," said Gene, "Then the people up in the moon must live to a very old age."

"You bet they do!" said Billy. "Why, the little

old man who took me up there was five hundred million years old. And he was only the baby of the family!"

"Gee willikens!" cried Paul Sprague.

"Do you know," said Billy, "one of these nights I'm going up there again. And then I shall stay there forever. Do you want to know why? Because my father says he's going to take me out of school. He wants to send me to work. Imagine a little fellow like me having to go to work in a factory!"

Just then Billy's mother called him. She wanted him to run and buy some prunes at the grocery store. What a shame, thought Gene, to send such a clever little poet on such a silly errand! He watched Billy disappear into the house, and he half expected to see him the next moment flying out again through the roof or chimney, and whizzing off to the grocery store on a broom-stick or a tree, or else sitting astride on a sunbeam. He realized, of course, that little Billy was merely spinning all these stories out of his own imagination. He had probably dreamt about that wonderful trip to the moon. But it was great, just the same, to have such interesting dreams.

That evening, when Gene was at supper, he told his parents about Billy's trip to the moon.

"That boy has such a splendid imagination," said Gene's mother, "that some day I expect him to be a great poet."

"Or a successful politician," laughed his father. "He's such a confounded little liar!"

But Billy became neither a politician nor a poet. Instead, he went to work in a canning factory. Gene wondered what a canning factory was like, and he asked Billy about it.

"A canning factory," said Billy, "is a place where you pack tomatoes and peaches into cans, and little children into a stuffy room."

"But doesn't the juice get all squeezed out of the tomatoes and the peaches when you pack them together like that?" asked Gene.

"Yes," said Billy. "And let me tell you something else, too. The juice gets all squeezed out of the little fellows that have to work in the packing room. It's so hot that you can hardly breathe in there. And they don't give you any chairs to sit on, either. They think you'll get lazy if you sit down, and then they won't be able to get so much work out of you."

"Then you don't like to work in a canning factory, do you?"

"I like it like poison!" said Billy. "How do you

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think you'd like it if they put you into a hot stove in the middle of July? That's how I like to work in a canning factory."

Billy often talked to Gene about his work, and Gene felt very indignant when he heard how children were torn like little plants away from their houses and stuck into hot and stifling and ill-smelling factories. Billy had to work nine hours a day packing the peaches and the tomatoes into cans. The foul air of the factory soon took the pink out of his cheeks. The fire in his eyes grew dimmer every day, until at last it sputtered out like the dying flame of a candle. At night he no longer joined the other children at their games. He was too tired to play with them. He told them no more of his beautiful stories. His mind was becoming dried up like his body in the heat that lay over the canning room like a heavy quilt. Now and then, on Sundays, he took a walk to the park with Gene Debs. How Gene loved him! And how his little heart ached as he saw his beloved Billy growing weaker every day!

One evening, as Gene and Billy were walking through the Park, Billy told Gene he was so disgusted with his work that he wished he could die. "I don't think it's fair," he said. "First God makes a

little fellow like me, and he gives me a brain with pretty stories in it, and he makes me want to be a poet, and then all of a sudden he allows me to be shoved away into a smelly factory! I wonder what sort of a game God is trying to play with us? When I die, I'm going to ask him!"

Billy grew weaker from day to day. He began to cough as he bent over the cans of fruits and vegetables, and his sick little body drooped more and more as the hot blasts of air swept over it.

One day the heat in the factory was so terrific that fifteen of the children who worked in the packing room fainted and had to be carried into the street. Little Billy was one of them.

The other children became better after a while. But Billy had to be taken to the hospital.

He never came home again. For several weeks the doctors tried their best to save him, but in vain. Gene came to visit him almost every day. Billy always held out his hand to him and smiled. But his lips were no longer red like the velvet petals of a rose. They were pale now, like the wings of a wounded white butterfly. A butterfly that was fluttering out of the green fields into the darkness of death.

One day, when Gene called as usual at the hos-

pital, they told him that Billy was asleep and would not wake up again for many, many days. And Gene understood. . .

6

Gene Has A Talk With his Mother

When little Billy's funeral was over, Gene spoke to his mother about him. He wondered what became of those exquisite fairy tales of Billy's now that Billy was dead. Were the fairy tales dead, too? Or was he still dreaming the self-same dreams while his body lay sleeping under the grass?

"Perhaps his dreams now are more beautiful than ever," said his mother. "Who knows?"

"But what's the good of his having any dreams at all if he cannot tell us about them?" asked Gene. "Why should a poet like Billy have been born in the first place if all his poetry was to be buried with him in the grave?" And Gene's heart rebelled against something. He didn't know just what it was that he rebelled against, but it was something very wicked. Something very hateful. Something that killed little poets before the flower of their imagination came to

full growth. How he wished that he could meet God face to face and ask him the meaning of all this! What was it anyhow, this ugly and savage thing that compelled little children to suffer and to die?

His mother seemed to guess his thoughts. "The trouble with most people," she said, "is that they are very stupid. They don't know what children are meant for. They regard a child not as a sweet and beautiful and holy thing, but merely as a block of wood which they can shape into an obedient tool for themselves. A tool that can keep on shovelling money into their greedy pockets. And that is why they take these children and whittle all the strength out of their bodies and all the beauty out of their hearts. For to such people nothing in the world, not even the life of a child, is as important as the glitter of gold."

And then his mother went on to tell him how some children are sent down to work in the coal mines, where they are shut away from the sun all day long. Above them, in the fields and the woods, the girls and the boys are dancing on the earth and the winds and the birds and the clouds are dancing through the air. But the little toilers that are shut up in the mines are compelled to sit in the darkness. There is

no sunlight for them, but only the flickering light of a lamp. And there is no fresh air for them to breathe, but only the black air of the mines that is full of gas fumes and coal dust. From early morning until night they sit in the blackness and break big lumps of coal into little pieces, until at last their own bodies are broken like the coal that lies in heaps all around them.

And then she told him how some children have to work in the mills, and others in cotton fields and tobacco fields, under a blazing sun that causes their skin to blister and even the trees and the flowers to shrivel up and die.

"But what thing *compels* all these children to work?" asked Gene.

"Greed compels them to work," replied his mother.

"I don't understand you," said Gene.

"I'll tell you," said his mother. "In every city there are some people who are greedier than their neighbors. They are not satisfied with a small house, or a small garden, or just enough clothes to keep them cool in the summer and warm in the winter, or just enough food to keep them healthy and in good spirits. Instead, they want to get an enormous house,

and many fields, and all sorts of clothes and bracelets and diamonds that they don't need, and enough food to keep an army of pigs in contentment for a whole year. They're very stupid, these greedy people that I'm telling you about. They insist on having a palace with a hundred rooms, when all they can stay in is only one room at a time. They buy a hundred suits of clothes, when they have only one small body to go into all these clothes. If a man had a hundred big bodies and two hundred pairs of arms and legs, then there might be some excuse for his being so greedy."

"But if a man had a hundred bodies," said Gene, "then he would have a hundred heads and he would be a hundred times smarter than he is now. And in that case he would know enough not to be greedy."

"You're quite right," said his mother, "The trouble with most people is that they have thousands of desires with but one stupid little head to tell them which of these desires are good and which of them are bad. And greedy people are people whose heads are too silly to advise them properly. They're really to be pitied. They want hundreds of things that they don't need. But all these things cost money, you know, and in order to get enough money to buy these

foolish and useless articles, they make other people work for them. They grind as much work out of them as they can, and they pay them as little as possible in return for all this toil."

"But why should they make *children* work for them too?" asked Gene.

"Because children are paid less for their work than the grown-ups," answered his mother. "You see, the less these greedy people pay to the workers, the more money they can put into their own pockets."

"But that isn't fair!" cried little Gene. "It's just like making a hungry child cook a big dinner for you and then eating up the whole dinner yourself."

"That's just exactly how it is," said his mother.

"Then all I can say," exclaimed Gene, "is that these men who make children work for them are very wicked, and I should like to kill them!"

"They're not wicked," said his mother. "They're merely stupid. And you can't cure them of their stupidity by killing them. For other stupid people will rise up in their place as soon as these are killed."

"Then what shall we do with these big fools?" asked Gene.

"We must educate the foolishness out of them," replied his mother.

"I imagine it's not an easy thing to do, is it?" asked Gene.

"No, my dear," replied his mother. "It takes a real man to tell the rich and the powerful that they are ignorant and need to be educated. For they think that they are the cleverest and the best people in the world just because their pockets are full of money. They do not realize that a full pocket may often go hand in hand with an empty head. And whenever any man reminds them of their foolishness and their selfishness. they get angry with him and they put him into prison together with murderers and thieves."

"Do you mean to tell me that they treat him just like a criminal?" asked Gene.

"Yes, they do," said his mother. And she went on to tell Gene about some of these courageous rebels who try to turn greedy fools into gentle men and women. "Once upon a time," she said, "there lived a man in Athens. His name was Socrates. He saw that most people were savage in their dealings with one another, and he tried to teach them to be civilized. He saw that they were foolish, and he tried to give them wisdom. He saw that they were greedy and he tried to show them how to be happy without being rich."

"And how did they reward him for being such a wise man?" asked Gene. "Did they make him their president or their king?"

"No," said his mother. "They poisoned him with a cup of hemlock."

"Stupid idiots!" cried little Gene with flaming eyes.

"Yes, they *were* stupid," said his mother.

"But that was two thousand years ago," observed Gene. "Surely people *nowadays* are not as ignorant as all that."

His mother shook her head. "I'm afraid they are, my little Gene. It was only a few years ago that they did the self-same thing to a man in our own country. His name was John Brown. He was a kindly old man who could not bear to see the sufferings of his Negro brothers, the slaves. He tried to make them free, and they hanged him for that."

"When I grow up," said Gene, "there's going to be an end to that sort of thing."

"What makes you think so, my little fellow?" asked his mother. She was smiling sadly into his eyes and sifting her fingers through his hair as the sunlight sifts through a field of golden grain.

"When I grow up," he repeated, throwing his

head back and squaring his little shoulders, "I tell you there's going to be an end to that sort of thing. How do I know that? Well, I'm going to put a stop to it myself. That's how I know!"

7

Gene Decides to Get a Job

When Gene was fourteen years old, he made up his mind to leave school and to go to work. His mother didn't want him to do it, as he was one of the brightest boys in his class and she hoped that some day he might grow up to be a great teacher. But Gene knew that his father was not earning enough to keep them all in comfort. There had been ten children in the family, and now there were only six. Four of them had died. Gene noticed that it was mostly in the houses of the poor that so many children died. He asked his mother the reason for it, and she told him that a child cannot live without plenty of fresh food in the daytime and an airy room to sleep in at night. But Gene saw that there were times when food was not at all plentiful in their house. And he noticed, too, that at night they were all obliged to sleep packed together in one or two small and stuffy rooms. And seeing all this, he de-

cided to take a hand in the support of the family. He talked it over with his father and his mother as they were all eating their dinner one Sunday. His parents argued and argued against it, but Gene had made up his mind, and there was no stopping him. He looked at the ravenous circle of his brothers and sisters as they were eating their dinner. What a healthy appetite they had! Good Lord, it seemed as if there was no bottom to their stomachs! With what a hungry gusto they stuck their greedy spoons into the big platter that was so fragrant and full of steaming meat and gravy! And to see them bite into a thick crust of bread or crunching away at a soup-bone all oozy with marrow would make your very mouth water! And those eyes of theirs, how they sparkled whenever one of them would tell a good joke and the whole childish orchestra would burst into a symphony of laughter! Oh, it was so good to see them sitting around the table and enjoying their family meal all together!

And then, as he looked at them, Gene thought of the others. They were not sitting at the table now, but lay sleeping under their heavy quilts of grass out there in the darkness. It was so early for those

little bodies to have gone to their rest when there was a whole lifetime of play still waiting for them! But Death had knocked four times at the door of the Debs cottage, and each time Poverty had thrown the door wide open.

And Gene made up his mind that there must be no more poverty in his family. Not another one of them must die if *he* could help it. He must go to work without any delay and add his own earnings to the earnings of his father. He was big for his age, and quite strong. He wasn't afraid of work. And as for his education, he could keep that up even if he did get a job. All that afternoon he kept reasoning with his parents about it, until at last they consented. For Gene was such a born orator that his parents just *had* to agree with everything he said.

And so it was decided that Gene would go to work as soon as he could get a job.

It was in the month of May. Every living thing felt a yearning and a tugging to be out and away under the blue spring sky. But Gene realized that for him the playtime of life was already a thing of the past. He was a regular man now at fourteen, seven full years before his time. He *had* to be a man from

now on and he must do a man's work if there was to be enough bread in the family.

And so he went and got himself a job in the railroad yards at Terre Haute.

8

He Goes to His First Night's Work

GENE had to go to work at night, for they had nothing to offer him in the daytime. It was quite a distance from his house to the railroad yards, and his mother gave him a lantern to light the way for him. For in those days they had very few street lights as yet.

Gene, as I have told you, was rather big for his age. And he was quite courageous, as you have already noticed. Yet the first night that he found himself alone in the darkness, he was filled with a great terror. For after all, he was only a little bit of a big fellow lost in the middle of the black night. It was drizzling and cold and shivery for that time of the year, and the fog lay so thick on every side of him that he seemed to be walking all alone at the bottom of a vast sea. Everything was so still and so frightful! Even the crickets had stopped their chirping and had gone to sleep in the rain. The whole world was

asleep, and only one little wet figure was trudging through the mist with a lantern in his hand. He wondered whether God saw him as he stumbled along through the cold rain. The fog was so heavy, he wouldn't be surprised if even God's eyes couldn't pierce through it.

Suddenly a weird wild shriek came tearing through the fog. Gene's hair stood on end. Was it a dead ghost descending from heaven through the night, or some wild beast making ready to spring upon him and to carry him off into nowhere? He stopped dead in his tracks, and his heart beat against his ribs like a frightened bird in a cage.

But the next moment he laughed aloud at his own fears. For the dagger-like noise that had just ripped the night wide open was neither the wail of a ghost nor the growl of a wild beast. It was only the whistle of the night express that was flying through Terre Haute at that moment. The train whirled by. It resembled a dragon with a thousand fiery eyes, and it screamed like a peevish child as the wind combed the sparks out of its long black locks of smoke.

"The train is just like a living thing," thought Gene, and this thought cheered him up a good deal. The whole world no longer seemed to be asleep in

the rain. It was awake now and shouting and laughing in its happiness to be up again and moving. "Heigho!" shouted the locomotive as it thundered through the valley. And the hills and the forests echoed back the shout and cried, "Heigho, old dragon! What's the good word tonight?" and then the wheels of the train took up the conversation, "O, I tell you it is glorious to be rolling through the darkness! O, I tell you it is glorious to be rolling through the darkness!" Over and over and over again the wheels kept singing the self-same words, until at last they died away in the distance. And now even the rain took up the song. "Don't be afraid of me, little fellow," said the rain to Gene Debs. "For I, too, am hard at work like yourself. I am washing the earth clean while everybody is asleep. Let them sleep on and dream sweet dreams, while you and I are awake. For there's work for us to do. You must buy bread and milk for your brothers and your sisters, and I must wash the faces of the flowers and smooth the hair of the trees and bring cool drinks to the roots that lie thirsting in the earth. We are comrades, you and I. Together we are wandering through the pitch-black night while our brothers and our sisters are dancing in the golden palaces of their dreams. Let

them sleep, little comrade. But for us there is no sleep. For you and I must toil all the night long to bring food for their bodies and beauty for their souls."

And when Gene heard these words, he was no longer afraid of the darkness and the rain. For they were all of them comrades now. He was going to his own work, and they were going to theirs. Hand in hand they went to their work together, Gene and the rain and the spirit of the night. And oh, it was so good to work while those you loved were asleep! Let them dream their sweetest dreams, and when they awoke in the morning, he would bring them a loaf of bread and a bowl of milk, and a handful of pretty things to play with. And as he thought these thoughts, his heart began to sing within him, and on his lips, too, a golden song blossomed out in the darkness. And swinging his lantern to and fro, he strode singing joyously to his first night's work in the train yards.

9

Gene Becomes an Engineer

FOR ABOUT A YEAR Gene worked in the yards and in the paint shops of the railroad. But he received very little pay for his work, and so he decided at last to apply for a job as locomotive fireman. He was very tall now, and he had the strength of a full-grown man. An so the masters of the railroad listened to his plea and condemned him to a full-sized job in the locomotive.

Gene Debs was now, at the age of fifteen, a real workingman. For it took a man with big muscles and a strong heart to feed the locomotive of a railroad train.

Have you ever seen a trainful of cars galloping like a steel race-horse over the tracks? And have you seen the locomotive, which is the face of this iron horse, puffing up smoke and fire through its upturned nostril? Well, this fire in the locomotive is what makes the train go. And it was Gene's task to keep

feeding the furnace with plenty of coal so that the train could go on and on and on without stopping.

Now if you imagine that it was fun to do this sort of thing, you are greatly mistaken. Every time that Gene had to open the door of the furnace, the heat struck his face like a heavy fist and took his breath away. He had to be continually on the jump as he kept shoveling more and more coal into the furnace. For the locomotive was hungry, and kept crying all the time for more food. And as Gene crammed shovelful after shovelful of coal into the mouth of the furnace, the sweat came down from his face in a stream. And the coal dust mingled with his sweat and blackened his features until you couldn't tell whether it was a human child or some enchanted black thing from another world that was condemned to feed the white-hot belly of the engine.

And for all this work he got only seven dollars a week. Which is less than some movie actors nowadays make in a single minute. That's how they used to starve the working people in those days!

Gene often wondered why it was that the people who did the hardest work got the least pay for their work. He watched the workingmen on the trains. What a splendid set of fellows they were! Many of

them were married and had large families. And their wives had to dress shabbily and wash other people's clothes and scrub other people's floors just because their husbands didn't get enough pay for the work that they were doing. And their children were sickly and puny and pale, because their parents were so poor. And when Gene thought of these things he remembered about little Billy, who died because the rich people were so greedy. And he said to himself that when he grew up, he would fight all his life for the sake of the poor and against the stupidity and the selfishness of the rich. Just how difficult this fight was going to be he hardly realized at the time. For he was only a boy as yet and he knew very little about the world.

10

Gene Fights a Duel With Sleep

PERHAPS you would like to find out how Gene spent his days after working all night on the trains? Most other youngsters, you know, would be so tired after their night's work that they would sleep all day. And you couldn't blame them, either. For the work in the locomotive took all the marrow out of a fellow's bones. But Gene couldn't afford to spend much of his time in sleep. He was too anxious to continue his education. And so, when he came home from his work in the morning, he scrubbed the dirt out of his face, put on a clean suit of clothes, and went to school, as though he had just got up from a good night's sleep full of pleasant dreams.

That's the kind of stuff he was made of!

He tried his best to be alert in school. But sometimes he caught himself napping while his teacher tried to explain an English sentence, or helped the

class to solve a problem in arithmetic, or described the movements of some silly battle in an old and forgotten war. The voice of the teacher kept droning away so monotonously that Gene's eyes would begin to close, no matter how hard he tried to keep them open. And then the teacher would suddenly turn into a big dragon-fly, and Gene would sit astride upon its long thin belly and fly out of the classroom and into the most wonderful countries that lay just the other side of the window. They would fly over gardens whose flowers were shaped like the letters of the alphabet, and whose birds and insects looked like commas and periods and question marks as they danced among the flower-beds and turned them into all sorts of phrases and sentences. And the sun that rode over these gardens was a great big locomotive, and suddenly Gene would find himself sitting in the middle of it, and shoveling enormous lumps of coal, each of them bigger than the whole earth, right into the gaping jaws of this gigantic locomotive. And as soon as the locomotive of the sun got up enough steam, it rattled away over the spacious heavens, dragging all the stars behind it in a long fiery train. What a clatter and a rumble through the prairies of the sky! For a hundred thousand years, it seemed,

they kept rolling along like this, with Gene at the engine. But all of a sudden there came a crash. Another sun, with another train of stars behind it, smashed headlong into the sun that Gene was driving, and Gene dropped plinkety plunk right out of the sky and found himself once more in the schoolroom. The boy who sat next to him was poking him in the ribs to wake him up. His teacher was still droning away at his monotonous task. Gene had been asleep but an instant. Strange how a dream that lasted a hundred thousand years could have taken place in a single instant! They must have a different way of reckoning time in the land of dreams, thought Gene.

But now he was awake, and he must try his best to stay awake. He must be attentive to his lessons, or he never would learn anything.

Oh, but it was hard to keep his eyes open! Invisible elves kept sewing his lids together and weaving a web of dreams over his tired body. It was so sweet to be asleep and so painful to stay awake! But he must not sleep, for there were lessons to be learned. Plenty of time to sleep in the afternoon. Four hours, five hours, perhaps even six hours! But now he must

keep his eyes open and learn the important lessons of the world.

And so he spent the precious time of his boyhood working in the locomotive at night, sleeping just a few scant hours in the afternoon, and trying his best to keep awake in the schoolroom in the morning. And so keen was his mind that he managed to stay near the top of his class in spite of his falling asleep now and then during the lessons.

11

A Sunday Evening in the Debs Family

EVERY SUNDAY, after a week of almost unbearable toil, the spirit of peace descended upon the Debs household. They had a peculiar custom in the family on Sunday. Perhaps Gene's father had brought this custom over with him from his old homeland in Alsace Lorraine. Perhaps they had adopted it out of some book or other. Who knows? But wherever it came from, it was a most beautiful custom. They called it the weekly family communion. Every Sunday, as soon as they got through with supper, the whole family would gather around the fireplace, and sing or dream or chatter away the evening, or tell stories to one another until it was time to go to sleep.

Let us invite ourselves to one of these Sunday evening family gatherings. I'm sure we shall not be intruding. Besides, we will take care to keep ourselves in the shadows, away from the family group, so as

not to break in upon the golden thread of their thoughts.

Are you ready for the visit? Very well, then, let us open the door and tiptoe quietly inside. Not a soul has seen us come in. How fortunate! We shall now be able to watch them without disturbing them in the least, for they are not even aware of our presence in the house.

Let us now glide, as silently as we can, into the farthest corner of the room and look about us a bit.

The room is as dark as an inkwell, except for the small circle of light shed by the fire in the fire-place. An endless army of shadowy figures, sculptured upon the walls and the ceiling by the flickering reflection of the fire, keeps marching around and around the room. Perhaps they, too, like ourselves, have come to listen to the singing and the telling of the stories?

But hush! Let's stop our thoughtless whispering about the marching shadows. For we don't want to frighten the family group and break up this strange communion of theirs. Let us rather direct our attention to them and see what they are doing.

They are all sitting in the magic circle of light in front of the fire-place. Gray heads, golden heads, and heads of dark hair. What a beautiful thing is a

human head framed in by a circle of light against a background of fantastic shadows! But let us look at them a little more closely. Can we recognize Gene among them? Why, yes. He is that tall, slender fellow, graceful as a young poplar tree, half child and half man, whose face is as radiant as the sun and whose voice is like the voice of a cello.. He is humming an old French tune. It is an almost forgotten song of his father's native land. Little golden goblets full of a rich and spicy wine are the words and the music of the song that he is singing.

He finishes the first stanza, and then the whole family joins in the chorus. And the elves and the pixies that are crackling and tumbling about in the fire-place add their own wee voices to the song, and the shadows keep dancing around the room in time to the music. And all this singing and dancing and swaying of shadows weaves a magic carpet under our feet and carries us over and beyond the threshold of fancy right into the world of enchanted dreams.

The song is finished, and for a time they all watch the gymnastics of the flames. Dandy, their father, puts a new log into the fire-place. The choked-up fire sputters and growls for a moment, and then leaps with an angry flare up into the chimney. But the

wind, who happens to be passing over the housetop at the moment, blows upon the flame and sends it snarling right back into the fire-place.

"The wind and the fire seem to be having a wrestling match with each other," remarks Dandy. "I wonder which of them is going to win out in the end?"

For a while it looks as if the wind is going to be the winner. Laughing and whistling over the chimney-top, he keeps the fire down in his place. At last, however, a log breaks in two, and a thousand sparks, released from their prison, fly straight up into the face of the wind. With a howl of pain the wind acknowledges his defeat, and limps whining and snivelling away into the darkness.

The fire now has free play, and all the eight members of the family, seated in the magic circle of light, watch his merry antics with a greater fascination than ever.

"O look, look!" cries little Theodore, six years old. "See those beautiful sparks whirling around like a big fiery top!"

"Do you know what these sparks make me think of?" says Gene. "A red blizzard. A ripping, roaring blizzard of fire, that's what they are."

"No, Gene," smiles his mother. "These sparks are not the fiery snow-flakes of a blizzard. They're golden bees in a bee-hive, and they carry bits of flaming honey to the little wee folk that live in the fireplace."

"Or perhaps they're the dried-up leaves of the tree of fire that we see blazing away there," observes the father. "Now that the tree is about to die, the little red leaves are drooping down to the ground and will soon be turned into ashes."

"Like everything else," muses Gene, and once more they trail off into silence, each one of them absorbed in his own little world of thoughts and fancies.

There is a music in their silence. Let us hold our breaths as we huddle there in the dark corners of the room. Perhaps we, too, shall be able to catch a stray bit of that music if we listen hard enough. Ah, yes, there it is! You recognize it, do you not? It is the song you hear when you wake up at midnight and see your mother bending over you. It is the song you hear when she weaves a silent music over your face with the shuttle of her fingers. It is the song of songs that all of us hear when two or more minds hold a silent conversation together. And it is this still

music that now fills the air until the very shadows seem to bow down to listen to it.

But suddenly there is a pause in the silence. Mother gets up from the chair and goes into the pantry. What business has she there, I wonder, to want to interrupt so beautiful a moment? Ah, but wait! She is coming back with a platter heaped full of the most delicious cookies!

Good heavens, how tempting they look! And what an abundance of them! There's surely enough to go around and to spare! Shall we come out of our dark corner and ask for some? But no, we mustn't allow our presence in the house to become known. We've promised not to disturb them, you know, and so we and the shadows must look hungrily on while the cookies are disappearing as if by magic.

And now the cookies are all gone, and the smallest of the children are getting a bit sleepy. Their eyelids are folding together, and their little heads, growing heavy with the weight of their dreams, begin to droop lower and lower. One by one Daisy takes them off to bed, much against their will, and the rest of the family prepare for the most interesting part of the evening. For Daddy is going to top off the enter-

tainment with one of those rare stories of his. He will start in as soon as mother comes back.

But what is that noise outside? It sounds like the patter of a hundred thousand footsteps. Are all the invisible little creatures of the night crowding around the house in order to hear Dandy's story? Perhaps. And perhaps it is nothing more than the rain dancing a minuet over the roofs of the city. Indeed, it *is* raining, and very hard, too. The wind that an hour ago was sent slinking away by the deluge of sparks in the fire-place has come back now, and he has brought the rain for an ally to help him fight his battle. Will he succeed *now* in putting out the fire? Let us wait and see, and in the meantime, let us listen to Dandy's story. For mother has finished putting the smaller children to bed, and Dandy is all ready to begin.

"The story I am going to tell you is about two Indian brothers," he says. "Once, many many moons ago, long before the white man came to America, there lived a powerful young chieftain in an Iroquois village. His name was Wingfoot. He was the fleetest runner and the best hunter in the tribe, and he had the admiration of all the men and the love of all the young maidens in the village. At night, when he sat down amidst his people to tell about his exploits, it

seemed as if the very crickets had stopped their chirping and huddled up close to listen to his stories. And the trees, too, bent their heads down to hear his words, and the stars flew down from the sky like a flock of silver birds, and the little red children of the village pointed their fingers up in the air and whispered to one another, 'See those beautiful falling stars! They're all coming down to listen to Wingfoot's stories!'

"And well they might! For his voice was like the West Wind, and words of many colors fell like rainbows from his mouth. Not only was he the fleetest and the bravest of his tribe, but the most eloquent teller of stories and the sweetest singer of songs. Only once in a thousand years, said the wise men of the tribe, did God take the trouble to send down on earth so perfect a man.

"And yet, for all that, Wingfoot was unhappy. He was all alone in the world. One by one his family had been killed in the Indian raids or carried away by the warriors into some distant tribe. Many an hour he sat brooding in his tent over his brothers and sisters who had died or were now living as strangers in the lands beyond the Great Mountains. One of them was especially dear to him. It was his little brother

of the laughing eyes. Gladheart was his name, and a right appropriate name it was, too. For the very ground seemed to dance under the dancing feet of that Indian lad, and whenever he smiled, flowers sprang up all around him from the earth.

"Wingfoot and Gladheart had been inseparable playmates, until one day a raid descended upon the village and Gladheart was carried off by the invaders. The days and the years fell away like withered leaves from the tree of eternity, and no word of Gladheart ever reached Wingfoot. And that is why Wingfoot was so unhappy. He went about the world as if one half of his heart had been torn out of his breast and cast away somewhere beyond the Great Mountains.

"Year after year he went far into the mountains to search for Gladheart, but he was never able to find him. At last he decided one summer evening that he would never come back to his village until he found his brother again. Taking his bow and his arrows, he stole quietly out of his tent and trudged off into the night.

"For many months he travelled through the pathless wilderness. From tribe to tribe he went, asking for his brother, but nowhere did he get any news of him. He waded over hundreds of streams, he encoun-

tered wild beasts without number, and more than once he met Death himself face to face. But not a word did he ever hear about his lost brother. The rains and the snows beat down upon him and weakened his body. The sun glared into his eyes and blinded them, and gloomy thoughts came into his heart like a flock of bats and tangled up all his senses, so that at last he was hardly able to stand on his feet or depend upon the vision of his eyes or trust in the wisdom of his own heart.

"And searching in this way for his brother, he came one day to a high plateau. It was so thickly covered with trees that the rays of the sun could scarcely ever find their way through the branches to the ground. The whole plateau was like a cave covered with a roof of dark green leaves. It was a lurking place for all kinds of poisonous reptiles and dangerous wild beasts.

"Wingfoot entered the dark plateau with cautious step. A mist was rising from the ground. The trunks of the trees looked huge and shapeless through the haze. Everything seemed to be twice or three times its ordinary size. Everywhere about him was a hissing of snakes and a growling of beasts, and overhead,

the North Wind seemed to be playing some wil
weird tune over a giant harp.

"Suddenly a huge black shapeless thing loomed u
through the fog. Wingfoot stopped in his tracks, ter
rified. The dark object was advancing straight upo
him! Wingfoot took quick aim and shot one of hi
arrows at the frightful thing. The arrow missed it
aim and was swallowed up in the fog like a drop o
water in a sponge. And the huge, dark, frightfu
thing was still advancing toward him through th
mist!

"By this time Wingfoot had completely lost hi
senses. With a cry of terror he let go another arrow
It hit its mark this time. The dark object leaped int
the air and then fell writhing upon the ground.

"Wingfoot was so close to it now that he could se
the outlines of its figure as it lay moaning on th
ground. It was a human being, like himself. If h
had only known it a few moments ago, before he ha
shot his arrow! Through the fog it had looked lik
some frightful ghost or some wild, unknown creatu
of the forest. And he had shot it before he took th
trouble to find out what it was. Perhaps this ma
might have turned out to be a friend. He might hav

been able, perhaps, to tell him some news about his brother, Gladheart?

"And what if it was not too late, even now?

"With this thought in his mind Wingfoot rushed up to the wounded man. But it *was* too late. The last arrow had been aimed only too well. The man was already dead.

"He was lying with his face on the ground. Wingfoot turned the body over gently, in order to see what manner of man he had killed. He lifted the man's head and peered closely into his features. Merciful heaven, he was looking into the face of his own brother, Gladheart!

"Taking the dear dead body in his arms, he sat upon the ground and began to sway to and fro, pouring out his piteous moans to the winds and the trees. And the trees looked sorrowfully down and shook their wise old heads.

" 'Poor fellow!' whispered a young linden tree to an old oak tree. 'He was looking for his brother, and when his brother came to him at last, he killed him.'

" 'It's the way of the world,' replied the wise old oak tree. 'All men and all nations are forever looking for their brothers. But the paths of the earth are so dark and the eyes of men so blind that they mis-

take their own brothers for enemies. And that is why there is so much cruelty and so much warfare in this world. For men do not know their own kindred.'

" 'Will they ever know them?' asked the linden tree.

" 'Yes,' replied the oak tree. 'In another hundred thousand years perhaps. For the world is still young, and the stupidity of men is like the stupidity of new-born babes.' And shaking his wise old head, he began to speak of other and more interesting subjects. For trees are quite sensible, you know, and it wouldn't do for them to concern themselves too much with the silly affairs of men. . . "

* * * * *

"And is this the end of the story?" asks Gene as his father stops speaking.

"Why, yes," says Dandy. "What else is there to say?"

But Gene is too busy with his own thoughts to pay any attention to his father's reply. He is looking straight into the fire-place, and seems to be addressing himself to the flames. "Wouldn't it be a fine thing," he muses, "if we could drive away the fog that keeps people from recognizing each other!"

But the flames make only a half-hearted reply. For

the wind and the rain have now gained a complete victory and the fire has been obliged to surrender at last. Here and there, to be sure, a slender blade of blue flame is still making somewhat of an attempt to sprout up out of the ashes. But one by one they abandon the effort and curl themselves up under the ashes and die.

"They're not very good fighters, these flames," remarks Gene.

His mother tries to defend them. "The odds, you see, are too much against them."

But Gene shakes his head. "I'd say to them, keep on fighting, no matter what the odds may be!"

And saying this, he rises, and goes into the next room to put on his working clothes. For Gene is still working in the night time, you know.

Dandy turns to his wife as soon as Gene is out of sight. "What a queer lad!" he murmurs. "Poor boy, I'm afraid he's in for a lot of suffering."

"Maybe," replies Daisy with a mist of tears in her eyes. "But I know he's going to do some big and splendid things before he gets through!"

* * * * *

And now, my little comrades, our visit to the Debs family is over for the present. Gene is dressed in his

old cap and blouse and overalls, and he is ready to leave for the trainshed. He is opening the door now, and this will give us a good chance to slip out as quietly as we came in.

It has stopped raining. The clouds are just beginning to break up. A single star is seen pointing down to the earth. It looks like a silver pen-point stuck into a bottle of ink. Some angel, perhaps, is holding it between his fingers, ready to inscribe a fiery poem upon the dark page of the heavens.

Down below, a train rattles by in the distance. It is a black and gold needle stitching its way through the night and sewing the cities of the world together into a lasting robe of friendship.

A lonely figure trudges through the street with a lamp in his hand. It is Gene Debs going to his work.

And now the clouds are all dispersed. One by one the stars have come out of their hiding places. The sky is a sieve now, and it sifts a shower of golden starlight over the roofs of a sleeping world.

The moon is coming up over the horizon, and the whole world is plunged into a sea of magic whiteness.

"What a setting for a play is this fairy world we live in!" muses Gene.

And indeed it *is* a setting for a play. And from now on Gene is going to be one of the leading actors in it.

Let us step aside and watch as the play moves on.

12

Gene Gets a New Job

FOR THE LONGEST TIME Gene's mother begged him to give up his job as a locomotive fireman. It was so hard for a boy to be working all night, and at such a dangerous job, too. Almost every day she heard of terrible accidents on the road. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, when the whistle of the locomotive came screeching through her sleep, she dreamt that she saw her Gene lying dead on the railroad tracks. And then with a shudder she would rouse herself out of her sleep, and stay awake until Gene came back from his work in the morning.

Gene was anxious to please his mother and to get some other kind of work if possible. But new jobs didn't grow on the trees, and it was almost four years before he was able to exchange his railroad job for another.

Another job, but not a better one. He was promoted from a locomotive to a grocery store. Instead of shovelling coal into the belly of a train, he now

had to deliver potatoes and pickles for the bellies of men and women and children.

It was not an interesting job by any means. Gene would have liked to write poems instead of measuring out potatoes, and he would far rather be making speeches than to be selling spinach.

But Gene made the best of everything. He soon came to realize that even as a grocery clerk he could live the life of a great man.

For Gene Debs was a poet. Up to that time, to be sure, he had not written a single line of poetry. But he was a great poet nevertheless. Writers, you know, are not the only poets in the world. There are others, and greater ones perhaps, than those who make rhymes.

Just what I mean by these words I must tell you in the next chapter.

13

Gene Begins His Great Poem

A POET, as some of you may know, is a *maker*, that is, a man who makes beautiful things. Whoever takes the dead letters of the alphabet and makes a living sentence out of them is a poet. And whoever takes a piece of clay and turns it into a fine statue is also a poet. But the man who takes a hopeless group of working people and turns them into a living body of hope is the greatest poet of all.

That's the sort of poet that Gene Debs was. He could take any group of men and put new life into them. He became aware of this remarkable talent of his at a very early age, and others were not slow in discovering it, either. He was only twenty years old when the workers of Terre Haute asked him to join their Brotherhood. They needed a man of his type. Young as he was, many people already turned to him as naturally as plants turn to the sun. He was six feet tall and sturdy as a pine tree. His features were thin

and refined. In his eyes there was a light of pity, and on his lips there played a smile of hope. When he was introduced to anyone, he bent over him, as if to warm him with the rays of his love, and the firm clasp of his hand put strength and ambition and courage into those who were ready to despair.

He was the youngest member of the Brotherhood. When he first entered the hall in which the Brotherhood met, an old man came forward to greet him. "How do you do, brother Gene?" he said. "My name is Joshua Leach, and I bid you welcome here."

Gene looked into the eyes of the old man, and they both smiled.

I'm glad to be one of you," said Gene as he took the old man's hand, "and I hope to do my share of the work here if you'll only let me."

Mr. Leach placed his big, hairy hand on Gene's shoulder. "My boy," he said gently, "you're a bit young. But I believe you're in earnest, and I *know* you'll make good."

What a prince of a man was this old Mr. Leach! He was only a locomotive fireman, to be sure. The palms of his hands were hard, and his nails were rough and broken and smudgy with coal dust. But his face was the face of a man with a noble soul. And

the clasp of his hand was firm and friendly and true. No handshake in the world, not even that of the president of the United States, could have given Gene a greater thrill of happiness than the handclasp of this splendid old workingman. He loved Mr. Leach from the very first moment that he saw him.

And the other members, too! What glorious fellows *they* were! Gene felt that God had made no mistake when he made these men. What a fine thing it would be to work with them and *for* them!

And how much work there was to be done! The laboring masses were poor and helpless. They were like so many lumps of clay lying scattered over the roadside. You could take each lump and squeeze it into whatever shape you liked. Or else, if you had a mind to, you could thrust it out of the way altogether as so much worthless rubbish. And that is just exactly what the masters of the railroads and the mills did with their men. They drove them like slaves and they regarded them as no better than cattle. They made them work from sunrise to sunset, and quite often until well into the night. And when the workers broke under the strain, their masters would kick them out of the way and hire others to take their places. And the workers, like the helpless

lumps of clay that they were, could only clench their teeth and suffer on in silence.

But Gene Debs took these helpless clods of earth and he molded them into a thing of beauty and he put the breath of life into them. And the workers were no longer helpless and divided now, but became united into a single living body. And when one of them was hurt, the whole Brotherhood now cried out in protest, just as a human creature cries when a finger is cut or an eye plucked out. And when one of them lost his job, the whole body of the Brotherhood quivered with pain, and would not rest until the unhappy member was once more restored to his job. They had always believed in the maxim, "Every one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." And now Gene took this bleating battle-cry of a defeated race and threw it into the garbage heap of forgotten things. And in its place he gave them a new and living motto:— "All for one and one for all!"

This, then, is the sort of poem that the obscure grocery clerk of Terre Haute was already writing across the flaming page of history. And for a title to this most living of all poems he took the words, "Workers of the World, Unite!"

And I for one must confess that nowhere in the printed books of the world have I ever seen a greater poem than this.

14

The Blizzard

GENE REMAINED but a short time in the grocery store. His services were needed in a wider field. He began to travel about from city to city and from village to village, organizing the workers of the nation into the Brotherhood, that great living body of men who could feel the wrongs and heal the sorrows of each one of its members.

But the masters of the men who did the world's work regarded Debs as a dangerous agitator. For he was turning machines into human beings, and you cannot get as much labor out of a man as you can get out of a machine. A man wants to rest sometimes, and to think. And all this means less profits for the greedy pockets of the masters. And so Gene Debs became a marked man, and all sorts of snares were laid in order to put a stop to his work.

But Gene paid little attention to them. He was too busy to waste his time in looking after himself. Besides, he felt no enmity against the masters. He did

not hate them. He merely pitied them for their stupidity.

And so he went about the country, wishing ill to no one, and ready to lay down his very life in his efforts to bring more and more men into the Brotherhood.

But travelling over the country was an expensive thing, and Gene was a poor man. And so he was obliged, most of the time, to ask the conductors of the trains to allow him to ride without any fare. The great majority were only too glad to give him a lift. But now and then he would run across a trainman who was not so good-natured as the rest. At such times Gene would slip quietly into an empty freight car and ride until he was discovered and put off. Time and again he was thrown out of the freight cars into the fields, and not always very gently, either. One night, in mid-winter, he boarded a freight train that was travelling through the state of New York. He was scheduled to give a lecture in the town of Elmira. There was a terrific blizzard blowing at the time, and the whole earth seemed to be tearing along like a white top in the whirlwind. The snowflakes charged through the air in a furious battalion of death and the wind was a great white bugler that led the

charge. All the weak live things retreated before the onslaught, and those that were too feeble or too slow to hurry out of the way were soon consumed in the cold white flame of the storm.

Gene huddled into a corner of the freight car. The cold made him shiver all over. His fingers and his toes felt as if long sharp needles were being passed through them. Through a crack in the door of the freight-car he could see the whirlwind charging through the fields. "Whew, but I'm glad I'm not out in that storm now!" he said to himself as he crouched still further into his corner.

They were drawing into the outskirts of a city, and one of the brakemen entered the freight car where Gene was hiding. The man was swinging a lantern in his hand, and the rays of the lantern fell upon the figure huddled in the corner.

"Hey, you bum!" cried the brakeman. "Tryin' to get a free ride, are you?"

"Yes, brother, I am," said Gene, grinning and offering his hand to the brakeman. But the brakeman was too cold to be civil at the moment. Disregarding Gene's profferred hand, and assuming a tone of cruel sarcasm, he said, "An' where are you going', may I ask?"

"To give a lecture," replied Gene.

"Oh, you are, are you?" sneered the trainman. "Well, you're goin' to give your lecture to the snowflakes, you dirty bum!"

Gene noticed that the trainman was a big and powerful fellow, and that he was as stupid as he was big. It was useless to argue with him. However, Gene tried to gain a little time. "I'll get off at the very next station, brother," he said.

"Don't you *brother* me!" growled the big trainman. "And don't you kid yourself, either. You ain't agoin' to no next station. You're gonna get off right here and now, see?" And pulling Gene's half-frozen body to the door, he flung him into a deep snow-bank as the train rumbled by.

Fortunately they were already in the suburbs of the city, and the train was going at a slow pace. Gene escaped with nothing more serious than a snow bath. He clambered out of the snow-drift, — and ran straight into the arms of a big Irish policeman!

But the policeman was warm and he had just had a good supper, and his temper therefore was much sweeter than that of the brakeman.

"Sure an' it's a cold night for a bath, ain't it,

friend?" he laughed as Gene's white figure rose like a ghost from the snow.

"I do it for my health," smiled Gene. "I take a snow bath every single night in winter. Most of the time I have my bathing suit on. But tonight I was in too much of a hurry, and so I had no time to take off my clothes."

The policeman took a fancy to Gene. He liked to see a man who could smile in the face of misfortune. "Too bad the brikeman chucked you, ain't it? he said.

"Well," smiled Gene, as he brushed the snow off his clothes, "it might have been worse. It's a lucky thing he didn't drop me out in the country. As it is, I've got only a few miles to go now before I get to Elmira."

"If I was you," said the policeman, " I wouldn't go no further tonight. I wouldn't try wrestlin' with no blizzard like that, if I was you."

But Gene shook his head. He had promised to speak to the workingpeople that night, and a promise with Gene was a sacred thing.

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed the policeman, as a sudden happy thought struck him. "Lemme put ye up in our jail till tomorrow. It's much more comfy than the white fields on a night like this. Ye'll have

a big fat snooze in a nice little cell and a good warrum breakfas' in the mornin'."

"It's very kind of you," smiled Gene, "But I must decline your invitation, I'm afraid." And he went on to tell the policeman how important it was for him to speak to the workingpeople that evening.

"Sure an' you're quite right," agreed the policeman, when Gene was through. "I only wish there'd be somebody to organize us cops, too. I got a missus and foive kiddies at home, and lemme tell ye, auld man, it ain't no picnic to support em all on eighteen dollars a week!"

"Some day," said Gene, "even the policemen of the world will be organized into a human brotherhood."

Gene spoke these words in a quite serious tone. Yet the huge policeman laughed when he heard them. For he had a good big measure of Irish wit in that helmeted head of his. "Begorra, but I loike the way you put it!" he exclaimed. "A human brotherhood, is it? An' by that you mean, I suppose, that at present us cops ain't naither brotherly nor human. Is that what ye mean?"

"Oh, no, no, I didn't mean that at all!" laughed Gene.

But the good-natured giant of a policeman paid no attention to Gene's protesting answer. "The way some of us cops go struttin' about God's earth," he said, "ye'd think we was dressed-up paycocks instead of human beings. We sure are a funny lot, ain't we?"

Gene would have loved to stay and have a real chat with this man. He was such a friendly old cuss! But Gene was in a hurry. He mustn't be late for his lecture. They were waiting for him already, no doubt.

"Well, brother," he said as he pulled the collar of his ulster up over his ears, "it's been a real treat to meet you. I'm almost glad now the brakeman chucked me off that old train of his."

They shook hands, and Gene trudged off into the storm. The snow had now turned into sleet, and it whirled against his face and lashed it with a thousand whips of fire. But it was a wet and clammy and disagreeable sort of fire. It trickled down his neck, it oozed in over the tops of his shoes, and it beat into his eyes and blinded them. His body became saturated with the dampness. The cold went to the very marrow of his bones. If he could only sit down and rest! But if he did that, he would be frozen to death most likely, and his body would be buried under the

sleet and the snow, never to be found again, perhaps, until the following spring, when the snow melted in the fields.

This frightful thought gave him new strength to move on and on and on through the storm. His clothes now clung in a shapeless mass about his body, and even his soul began to feel like a limp rag. A limp wet rag that the angels would have to wring out thoroughly before they could recognize it as the soul of Eugene Debs. It wouldn't do, therefore, to die just now. They wouldn't know him even in heaven if he should come in looking as he did at that moment.

Wretched as he was, he smiled at this peculiar fancy. He imagined himself frozen to death, and trying to slush his way into the presence of God. "Hold on, stranger!" cries an angel with snow-white wings. "Don't you know you can't be admitted into heaven in this condition?" But the soul of poor Gene is cold. He must get in somehow to warm himself. He takes a step forward. The wet snow drips down from his clothes and forms a dirty puddle on the spotless blue floor of heaven. "Out with him!" cry a thousand angels who have crowded around the door to see what is the matter. And the soul of Gene Debs,

ashamed and humiliated, shrinks back. The door of heaven is slammed in his face. But he is loath to go as yet. He takes a last peep through the keyhole of the golden gate. An angel in overalls, with a silver mop, is swabbing up the puddle that poor Gene has made on the floor, and another angel is scattering a handful of golden sawdust over the wet spot. . .

With a shudder Gene shook himself free from his revery. He mustn't give in and go off dreaming like that. It was a sure sign that the storm was getting the better of him. Strange, fantastic shapes were looming up in the storm right in front of his eyes, and a pleasant numbness was stealing over his whole body.

He wanted to sit down and rest, if only for a moment. But he knew that if he should sit down, he would never be able to get up again. The figure of death was riding on the wind and calling to him. Nearer and still nearer he came. He was dressed in a long white mantle of drifting snow, and his face was as black as the night.

"Sit down, my child, and rest yourself," he crooned. "Why struggle on so foolishly against the blizzard? What will you gain by it? Nothing but a few extra years of suffering. Take my advice now, my child, and lie down to rest. I will rock you in the

cradle of the storm and bring to your tired eyes such dreams as only I can bring."

And saying this, he gathered the snow into a drift and spread out a soft white pillow for Gene to lay his head upon. But Gene knew him, for all his treacherous wiles, and he refused to listen to his words. On and on he fought his way through the storm, until the blood began once more to tingle through his veins and the figure of death rode slowly away on the retreating tempest.

The city lights of Elmira, where he was to lecture that night, began to appear through the darkness. Only a mile or two more, and he would be there at last!

Cheered by the sight of the city lights, he drew his coat tighter about him and trudged on and away through the night. The tempest threw a winding wet sheet of rain and snow over his body, and the outlines of his figure became fainter and more faint until at last they were swallowed up in the whirlpool of the darkness.

15

Gene Delivers His Lecture

When Gene arrived in Elmira, he just had enough time to change into a dry suit of clothes and to gulp down a cup of hot coffee. He hurried down to the hall and stepped upon the platform. As he bowed smilingly to the right and to the left, no one in the audience would have suspected that he had just fought through one of the worst battles in his life in order to get there on time.

In spite of the blizzard, the hall was packed to the doors. For everybody knew that when Gene Debs spoke to them he would pluck the winter out of their hearts and scatter a thousand blossoming hopes before their eyes. There were many Americans in the hall, and a good many foreigners, too. For they all knew that Gene Debs spoke the universal language of love, a language which every one of them, whether native or foreign, could understand. There they sat, quiet, tense, and eager, waiting for him to begin. But

their faces were sad and pinched with hunger, and their lifeless eyes were like cold gray lanterns whose light had gone out.

Gene Debs bent forward and held out his hands to the audience, as if to take them all to his heart in a single embrace. "My beloved comrades!" he began, and at his very first words their faces lighted up with an eager hope. He spoke to them of their present sorrows, of men who died from toiling overmuch, of women who were chained to their daily tasks, of children who fed the machines, but who themselves were compelled to starve in return. And then he pictured to them a new world, a world in which there would be no overworked men or pale and tired women or sickly children. A world in which happiness would flourish like a garden, and where justice would cover the earth like the waters of a peaceful sea. And the doors of a new heaven seemed to open up before the eyes of his audience, and his words came from his lips like singing birds with golden wings, lifting the hearts of his listeners up and away from the dingy hall and their still dingier homes. Together with their speaker they rose to the top of a high mountain, and from there they could see the old world of sorrows cast into the garbage-heap of

GENE DEBS DURING
THE GREAT PULLMAN STRIKE

the heavens like a worm-eaten apple. God had no further use for it. He had made a new world in its stead. A new world of justice. And he rolled it into the heavens beneath the sun to take the place of the old world. And with his gentle hand he brushed the face of the waters and they were still. And he breathed upon the heavens and they opened like a vast blue flower. And then softly he laid his fingers on the hearts of men and women and children, and their lips blossomed into a song of triumph.

All this, and much more, they saw as the words of Gene Debs wove dreams of golden beauty before their eyes. And they resolved that, no matter what happened to them, they would follow him to the very ends of the earth!

At last he finished his speech. "The world which I have just pictured to you," he said, "is to be of your own making. Don't sit still and dream about it. Get together and *work* for it. God is waiting for you to take this poor and raggedy old earth of his and to turn it into a garden of plenty. Build for yourselves a heaven right here on earth. Get together. Again and again let me repeat these words to you, — *Get together!* Let us all, from now on, live and work,

and if necessary, *die* for this one motto: *Workers of the world, unite!*"

When the last words were out of his mouth, there was breathless silence for a moment. And then the enthusiasm of the audience broke loose. Men threw their hats into the air and yelled themselves hoarse. Women stood on their chairs and waved their handkerchiefs. And even children — for there were children, too, in the audience — jumped upon the chairs beside their mothers, and their shrill voices zigzagged like threads of red flame through the shouting and the clapping of hands. "Good old Gene!" they cried again and again. "Dear old comrade!" And Gene stood tall and smiling in the midst of it all, like an angel of peace descended upon earth, and his glowing eyes were filled with tears and his gentle heart overflowed with love. He had taken another hopeless and lifeless mass of workingpeople and with the magic of his words had transformed it into a body of living hope. Another victory won. Another great poem added to the book of life!

And then, as Gene watched the audience from the platform, his vision pierced into the future. He could see them marching and singing their way out of the darkness into a new day of freedom. Not these

broken-down old men and women, perhaps, but their children. Ah, yes, the children of the nations. In the dear brave hands of the children lay the making of a new world. A world of one country and one law, the law of justice. A world of plenty. A world of peace. . .

Ah, what a dream for the children of the nations to build upon! Would they ever be equal to the task?

It was with this vision in his heart that Eugene Debs stepped down from the platform. The audience was slowly filing out of the hall. One of the women was leading a little girl by the hand. The child was wearing a string of red beads around her pretty throat.

"Do you know," said Gene, bending down and taking the child into his arms, "that's the kind of necklace I myself used to wear when I was a little girl."

For a moment the child looked at him in wonder. For she didn't know what in the world he was talking about. But then, seeing the mischievous twinkle in his eyes, she burst into a peal of joyous laughter.

As Gene put her down again upon the floor, he felt a tugging at his sleeve. He turned around and saw a little Negro girl looking up into his face. "I'se a little chile, too, Mistah Debs," she ventured bashfully.

"Why, bless your dear heart, of course you are!" he said and stooped down to kiss the black velvet flower of her forehead.

And then, turning to the other children who were crowding around him, he said, "May God bless you all, my little comrades! For you and your playmates, I know, are going some day to build a new heaven on this savage old earth of ours!"

16

Gene Tries Politics For a While

WHEN GENE RETURNED to Terre Haute, his friends urged him to become a politician. He was such a splendid orator, and he had such a friendly way about him, that they thought he would go very far indeed if he went into politics. First they would elect him to Congress. Then, perhaps, he would return and become the Mayor of Terre Haute. After that, they said, they would try their best to make him Governor. And then, who knows? Perhaps he might be elected to the Senate or even become the President of the United States! Nothing, they insisted, would be impossible for a man of his calibre.

For a year Gene listened to the advice of his friends and tried to be a politician. He joined the Democratic party and he was elected to the Indiana legislature. But at the end of the year he gave it up

as a bad job. He found that it was a pretty difficult task to be an honest man and a successful politician at one and the same time. As a child he had been told that honesty is the best policy. But his year in the Indiana legislature had taught him that honesty is certainly not the best politics. And Gene Debs preferred to be an honest man rather than a popular politician.

No, Gene did not want to be a politician. He wanted to work for the public, but he did not want to work the public for his own ends. He was anxious at all times to be frank with others and true to himself, and therefore he felt that he had no talent for politics. Besides, he didn't care to be a leader of the people. "A leader," he said, "is a man who rises to the top by standing on the backs of other people. To get up in the world, it is necessary to push others *down*, and I don't want ever to become great at the expense of my own brothers and sisters."

"But," they said, "we need *somebody* to show us how to go ahead with the business of life. Somebody who is wiser and better than the rest of us."

"Who am I," he replied, "to think that I am better or wiser than my brothers? Am I, then, made of gold, and are the rest of them made of lead?"

And when they urged him still further, he merely

shrugged his shoulders, and said with a smile, — "No, my friends, if you are looking for a leader, I'm afraid you will have to look elsewhere. But if you are looking for a comrade, a helper, and a brother, then I am ready to come to you whenever you call upon me. For I want the people to know me, not as Governor Debs, or Senator Debs, or even President Debs, but merely as *Comrade* Debs."

Gene Debs, you see, had his own ideas about greatness. Most people foolishly believe that in order to become great you must get *ahead* of others. But Debs, on the other hand, believed that the way to become great is to *help* others. Life to him was like a mountain full of dangerous precipices. Everybody tried to clamber to the top and gave little heed to those who were becoming dizzy with the climb and who fell, bleeding, into the depths below. Some of the more ambitious climbers even kicked those who were below them, or shoved roughly out of the way those who were on a level with them or just above them. Sometimes they stepped on other people's heads to get a firmer footing, and sometimes they threw jagged stones at those who seemed to be in their path. Nothing mattered to them except to get to the top and to become a leader. The most import-

ant thing in the world, to these foolish people, was to "achieve success." But Gene Debs knew better. The thing that mattered most to him was not to kick others out of the way and to rise to the top himself, but to help others over the dangerous places. For some of them were lame, and the climbing was too painful for their halting steps. Some had lost the way, and were walking aimlessly about with despair in their eyes. Still others, too weak for the struggle, were clinging to the very edge of the precipice. Only a few minutes more, and they would be dashed to the bottom of the mountain. It was so easy to thrust all these weak and unfortunate creatures out of your way. Your own path would then be made clear. You would climb to the top and you would become rich and famous, and everybody would be writing books about you. You would be hailed as a great hero, like Caesar, or Napoleon, or John D. Rockefeller, and the histories would then be full of your exploits. And so,—

"Reach the top!" cried the admirers of Gene Debs who saw how strong he was.

"Become a great leader!" cried the politicians who saw how able and how wise he was.

But Gene would not listen to them. "If God has

given me strength, he said, "it is in order that I might help those that are weaker. And if he has given me a little bit of wisdom, as some of you seem to think, it is in order that I might share it with those who are less wise. But I will *not* rise above my fellows. So long as there is a weak and struggling creature below me, I shall stoop down to lift him on a level with myself. So long as there are wounded and bleeding comrades at the bottom, I shall be ready to go down and nurse them back to health and help them to start all over again. My place shall always be, not among the mighty leaders at the top, but in the bottom ranks of the sick and the poor and the helpless."

"But if you do that," said his friends, "then how can you ever hope to be a success in life?"

"I don't want to be a success," replied Gene, smiling that sweet, gentle smile of his. "I just want to be a man."

"The fellow talks like a fool," said Gene's friends and shook their heads. But he was far wiser than they knew. For he talked the language of true heroism. It was all very well for beasts in the jungle, for tigers and leopards and hyenas, to talk about fighting their way to the top. But human beings are not beasts.

And Gene Debs was human. He cared nothing about fighting. Leave that to the wildcats of the forest. Let *them* be ambitious. Let *them* strive for success at the expense of other living creatures. It was the business of a man like Debs to use his hands, not to grasp, but to caress, and to use his brain, not to scheme and to plot how to outwit his fellows, but to plan how to make life a little more endurable to the unhappy children of the human race.

For Debs had a human heart. A heart that bled whenever a brother was in pain. And a heart that rejoiced only then when all those about him were filled with joy.

And that is why Gene Debs, throughout his life, preferred to be a man instead of being merely a success.

17

Gene Gets Lost in a Dream

It was just about this time that Gene Debs forgot everything else in the world and got lost in a dream. One day he met a real princess out of a fairy tale. At least to him she was a princess. Her name was Katherine, which is neither a very pretty nor a very ugly name. But to Gene Debs this name held a magic sound. When the winds played over the grasses, the name of Katherine fell like a golden shower from their lips. And when the rain came down from the clouds like a harp of a thousand strings, it seemed to him as if God's fingers were plucking the strings and as if God's voice were singing the name of Katherine. And following the magic sound of this music wherever it called him, he lost his way out of the world and found himself in the midst of a dream. And oh, it was a beautiful thing to lose a silly world and to find a dream in its place! He walked about as if he lived in a crystal palace. No-

body else ever came into this palace, for it was beyond the borders of the earth. That is, nobody ever came there but Katherine. For she, too, was lost in the self same dream. Like a god and a goddess in some ancient Greek legend they wandered through this crystal palace, far above the clouds. The whole earth was nothing but a foot-stool which he was ready to put under her feet, and the stars were nothing more than a cluster of flowers that she was ready to pluck out of the sky and place upon his brow. For it is a well-known fact that everything is possible to those who are in love. Yet it is another well-known fact that when two people are in love they do not care about such trifling gifts as a handful of stars for a crown or a planet for a footstool. For they have each other. And that, as you know, is after all the greatest gift in the world.

And so these two wandered through the crystal palace of their love, and for a time they forgot about everything else in the world. And after awhile they were married, and Gene was so absorbed in his dream that he forgot even about his comrades. But only for a short time. For Eugene Debs was not the man to live very long in a dream-castle all by himself while his comrades were toiling and hungering in the out-

side world. The earth was an unfinished toy, he knew. A toy that God had flung out of his work-shop in a moment of anger. And it was up to men like Gene Debs to complete this imperfect toy and to turn it into a thing of beauty. And so, hand in hand with his beloved Katherine, he emerged from his dream-castle and once more threw himself into the fight to rebuild the world.

18

Soldiers, Quakers, Pacifists, and Other Fighters

GENE DEBS, you must remember, was a fighter. Not a warrior, but a great fighter nevertheless.

Now, as some of you may know, there are four kinds of fighters in this world, — the Soldiers, the Quakers, the Pacifists, and the Strikers.

First, but not foremost, come the Soldiers. Soldiers are the least civilized fighters in the world. They believe that the only way to make people good is to kill them. It is of course a crazy belief, and it is held only by warriors and lunatics. And yet in every country, I am sorry to say, young men are being taught to become efficient soldiers.

So much, then, for the Soldiers. Next to the Soldiers come the Quakers. They, too, are brave fighters, just like the soldiers. But their methods are different. It is their belief that the only way to make people good is to *refuse* to kill them. It requires a great deal

of courage to have this belief, and to live up to it. Thousands of Quakers have been jailed, and thousands put to death, for refusing to kill their enemies. For several hundreds of years now the Quakers have been fighting this goodly fight against war. And you may be sure that they will win out in the end. Common sense always wins out against lunacy.

The Quakers, then, are as you see, among the more sensible fighters of the world. Similar to the Quakers, yet different in a way, are the Pacifists, men like Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, and Mahatma Gandhi. They, too, just like the Quakers, refuse to kill. They, too, are enlisted in a life-long war against war. But they go even further than the Quakers. They not only refuse to kill their enemy, but they give him a cup of water if he is thirsty and bind up his wounds if he is hurt. For an enemy to them is a brother who is blinded with hate. Kill his hatred, they say, by being gentle with him, and in this way you will turn every enemy into a friend. It requires great courage, of course, to forgive an enemy. It requires still greater courage to be gentle with him. But it pays. Good heavens, how it pays! Just try it some day, and you will see what a fine thing it is to be able to turn an enemy into a friend!

And so the Pacifists, too, are fighters. Only, instead of fighting against men, they fight against the evil that is in the hearts of men. And this brings us to the fourth class of fighters, — the Strikers.

A striker is a soldier who fights in a bloodless war. He knows that there are four ways in which you can deal with an enemy. You can either kill him, or pity him, or repay him with mercy for his hatred, or else knock a bit of sense into his silly head by refusing to work for him. This last method, believes the striker, is the very best method of all. And so a good striker generally fights his battles by staying at home. He is an unarmed soldier in a new kind of crusade, a peaceful crusade for Justice. For it is Justice, above all things, that he is after. Justice for overworked men, for hungering women, and for pale and sickly children.

A strike, therefore, is a holy thing. It is a fight for the rights of the toiling masses. It is a heroic battle against greed. Yet it is a battle of peace. It is a battle in which your mightiest blows can be struck by merely folding your hands when your oppressors call upon you to do their work.

This is the kind of war in which Eugene Debs believed and for which he was ready to lay down his

life. And many, indeed, were the occasions when he had to risk his life and limb, and little enough was the reward he ever got. The hatred of the rich is what he got for his pains, and the derision of the fools, and the scorn of those who occupied the seats of the mighty.

Yes, but at the same time, too, he won the reverence of millions of working men and women, and the love of a host of little children. And, after all, can one ask for any greater reward than that?

19

Gene and the Railroad Strike

It was in 1894, quite a few years before many of you were born, that Debs had to fight the first big battle of his career. The men that worked on the railroads went on strike. They struck because their children were hungry. They struck because they saw, in their ill-ventilated shacks, too many pallid cheeks and feverish hands. They struck because the eyes of their little ones were full of a strange wonder that the world into which they had been invited should promise so much to everybody and then offer so little, oh, so very little, to the children of the poor. They struck because death was too frequent a visitor in their homes. And they struck because, on top of all that, the greedy princes of wealth decided to reduce their wages still more.

It was a holy crusade for justice, this strike of the railroad men of 1894. And Gene was their leader and their savior in this holy crusade. He disliked the

word "leader", and yet, without his leadership and his wisdom and his courage, the fight would have been lost.

He threw himself into the battle from the very start. To be sure, he was not at this time a railroad worker himself. But he had been one in the past, and he loved his former comrades. Moreover, he could not see oppression anywhere without raising his hand and his voice against it. In fact, it was for this very reason, he believed, that God had put him into the world. He was born to fight for his weaker brothers, just as the oak-tree was created to protect the sparrow against the wind and the rain.

And how he did fight for his brothers! The princes of wealth were swept off their feet, and in less than three weeks the railroad workers marched on to victory. And what a victory! Not a blow had been struck. Not a single drop of blood had been spilled. The workers had merely said, "We refuse to run your trains until you pay us enough to feed our children!" The owners of the railroads enlisted the services of the governor, who tried to break the courage of the strikers. A good many governors, I am sorry to say, are only too willing to fight on the side of wealth against justice. The governor sent for Debs

and tried to induce him to call the strike off. He talked for a long time, telling Debs that it was the duty of the workers to be true to their employers. What he meant to say, of course, but didn't dare to, was that, in his opinion, it was the duty of the workers to allow themselves to be robbed by their employers. But Gene Debs was not to be fooled by this kind of talk. When the governor had finished with his long oration, Debs stood up and said, "Now, Governor, I have listened to all you have had to say. Are you through?"

The governor said he was.

"Well, then," said Debs, "for the first time in your life look into the eyes of an honest man. You can take this whole rotten speech of yours, with my compliments, and go straight to the devil! We don't want any more of your fine phrases. What we want is bread for our children and justice for ourselves. And, by heaven, we are going to get it!"

And they did get it! There is no power in the world that can stand up against the forces of labor once they are united.

When the strike was over, Debs returned to Terre Haute. It was a warm spring day. A host of cheering men and women and children greeted him as he

stepped off the train. Many of them wore red bands across their shoulders to symbolize the rich red blood of brotherhood that flows in the hearts of the working people. They brought him a splendid carriage in order that he might ride in triumph through the city. But Debs preferred to walk in the ranks. Always in the ranks, with his loving comrades at his sides, never at their head! Amidst the shouts of the people and the songs of the children he walked through the streets of the city. And the clouds, as they hurried across the sky, stooped down for a moment to find out what was the cause of the shouting and the singing. And the winds left the open spaces and tiptoed silently into the city to see why the people had such deep red bands across their shoulders and such glowing bright looks in their eyes. And they saw Gene Debs standing in the midst of his comrades and speaking to them. "Now that you have won the fight," he said, "you can go home rejoicing. I am glad to be able to say to you today, that in our entire battle for the rights of labor not a single human life has been lost. We have taught the world to fight a new kind of war, a war without bullets, and we have gained a new kind of victory, a victory without bloodshed. And for

this, my comrades, every one of you deserves the greatest kind of glory.

"But as for myself, my glory consists in the straightened backs of the toilers and in the sweet laughter of their children. I ask for no other victory than to be able to bring justice among men, and for no other glory than to be able to put laughter into the heart of a child."

"How beautifully he speaks!" murmured the clouds to one another and hurried off to report to the seven skies the great news of the workingmen's victory.

The winds gathered up their skirts and followed the clouds. And as they were turning to go, the South Wind took the West Wind by the hand. "Let me tell you what happened last night," said the South Wind. "I was learning a new dance under a blossoming plum-tree. My skirt got caught in one of the branches, and as I shook the branch to loosen my skirt, a thousand blossoms fell through the air. It was like a flock of silver birds descending in the moonlight. Never in my life have I seen anything so beautiful."

"What makes you think of it just now?" asked the West Wind.

"This man's talk makes me think of it," replied the South Wind. "The words that fell from his lips were just like the blossoms that I saw last night descending in the moonlight."

"I dare say you are right," agreed the West Wind. "I have heard all kinds of human speech in my lifetime. But it is two thousand years, I believe, since I have heard anything so gentle as the words of this savior of the workingpeople."

20

A Shameful Page in Our History

Gene Debs and the workingpeople had won a victory. But it was a short victory. For the princes of wealth were greedy, and they were ready to spring like wolves upon the defenceless homes of the toilers.

One of the greediest of these men was George M. Pullman. Mr. Pullman was the owner of the Pullman cars that you often see attached to passenger trains. Just why one man should own so many cars, I'm sure I don't know. Do you? The only fair thing, it seems, would be for the people who *made* those cars to *own* them. Don't you agree with me? But, then, the world is so stupid that it is always ready to do everything but the fair and sensible thing. Pullman became the owner of thousands of railroad cars because he was a sharp and unscrupulous business man, and tens of thousands of people worked for him and starved for him because their business sense was

not so keen as his. And Pullman had a way of grinding every ounce of their strength into money which he kept constantly putting into his own pocket. He offered them just enough pay to keep them starving and working for him. And then, when he paid them their poor wages, he devised quite a plan whereby he was able to get all this money back into his own pocket again. He built dirty and unhealthy shacks for them to live in, and he made them pay high rents for these shacks. And he opened stores in which he sold them unwholesome food to eat and poor clothes to wear, and he made them pay exorbitant prices for their food and their clothes. And in this way he owned the toilers body and soul, and they became no better than his slaves. And every Sunday he went to church and thanked the Lord for having made him so shrewd, and for having made the people that worked for him so stupid.

But the toilers were not quite so stupid as he thought. One day they roused themselves from their sleep. From coast to coast they stood up as one man and shook the chains of slavery from their backs. And when George M. Pullman saw this, a great terror fell upon him. For he knew that the palace in which he lived, and the houses in which the toilers starved,

and the trains which the hands of the toilers ha built, were not his by right, but belonged to thos who had made them. Good Lord, what if they shoulc suddenly take it into their heads to possess that which was rightfully theirs! This dreadful thought made him so panicky, that he sent up a cowardly prayer to God. "Oh, merciful Father in Heaven," he mumbled, "confound those dirty foreigners for my sake! Crush the power out of their hands and the rebelliousness out of their heart. Leave unto them just enough strength to toil for me, and just enough wisdom to be loyal to my commands. All else, O merciful God, I beg of Thee to take away from them. Hearken to this my prayer, O Lord, and accept the humble thanks of a pious Christian. Amen!"

And having prayed this prayer, he now believed that God would be on his side. But yet he feared that God's help alone would not be enough, and so he sent another cowardly prayer to the president of the United States, begging him to send out the militia against the strikers. And the president listened to his prayer and ordered the soldiers of the American army to put an end to the strike.

That's the sort of unfair man we had for a president in those days! His name was Grover Cleveland.

And so things looked black indeed for the strikers, and they would have lost heart, were it not once more for the intelligence and the fearlessness of Eugene Debs. With him to direct them and to cheer them on, they marched away from the railroad yards and went to their homes. Let the soldiers polish up their popguns and sharpen their bayonets! Trains could not be run with bayonets and with guns. It took men to feed the engines and to turn the wheels of the cars, and the men stayed home and refused to work for scoundrels and thieves.

And when Mr. Pullman saw that he could not move his trains, even with the help of the soldiers and the president, he went to a prejudiced judge, and he asked him to pass a law against the strikers. And the judge was only too glad to do it, for to some judges the command of a rich man is more important than the cry of Justice. And so the unjust judge issued an order against the strikers, telling them that it was a crime for a workingman to refuse to work.

It was at this point that Eugene Debs did a sublime thing and went to jail for it. He disregarded the law. He felt that there are times when it is the duty of an honest man to disregard the law, and that this was one of the times. The judge had decreed

that the railroad men had no right to strike. But Debs went right ahead with the strike, paying no attention either to the stupid judge or to his unjust command.

He was arrested and sentenced to six months in jail. He was guilty of the crime of showing too much love for the poor, and for this he had to be locked up together with murderers and thieves.

But he was not alone in the cell. The hearts of a million workingmen went there with him. And the admiration of his brave parents, too. "Stand by your principles," they wired to him during the trial, "regardless of consequences!" And the love of a great poet, too, went with him into his cell. For just before his arrest, he received a telegram from Eugene Field. "Dear Gene," wrote the poet-lover of children and of all those whose hearts were like the hearts of children. "Dear Gene, I hear that you are to be arrested. When that time comes, you will need a friend. I want to be that friend. . . . Eugene Field.

Yet, in spite of all these friendships, it was a frightful thing to be locked up in a cage, to breathe the loathsome air of the prison, and to sleep upon a filthy mattress of straw. But Debs was young, and his body was vigorous, and when he left the prison, he was none the worse for the experience. The princes of

wealth had tried their best to break him, and they failed. For, as he lay in his cell, he dreamed a great dream, and as soon as he was released, he set about at once to make this dream come true.

21

Gene Debs Becomes a Socialist

IN THE LAST CHAPTER I told you how Gene Debs dreamt a great dream as he sat behind the bars in Woodstock Jail. His eyes pierced through the walls of his narrow cell and into the world beyond. And he saw the earth rolling through the heavens like a beehive. A vast and ugly beehive, in which the toilers who worked the hardest received the smallest portion of money for themselves. He saw the masters of the bees loafing over the earth or sailing the seas in spacious ships, while their slaves starved and worked themselves to death. He saw beautiful palaces rising up on the hilltops like flowers of granite and steel. But he also noticed that those who lived in the palaces had nothing to do with the making of them. He saw thousands of men digging coal out of the earth, and thousands of others weaving cloth in the mills, and then he saw how a few idlers took this coal and cloth and sold it and reaped for themselves

all the profits thereof. And those that built the palaces and produced the coal and wove the cloth had only poor hovels to live in and very little warmth in the winter and nothing but rags to wear all the year around.

They didn't know any better, these poor people. They didn't realize that the palaces ought to belong to those who had built them, that the coal ought to warm those who had dug it out of the ground, and that the cloth ought to cover those who had woven it in the mills.

But why didn't they realize all this? Why were they so ignorant about their own rights? These were questions that bothered Debs for a long time as he sat in his cell. But little by little the answer came to him. The workers were ignorant about their rights because the masters tried their best to *keep* them in ignorance. They hired preachers in the churches to teach the workers to be humble. They hired teachers in the schools to teach them to be loyal. And they hired soldiers in every city and village to teach them to be ready at all times to go to war.

And so the workers, led on by their false teachers, allowed themselves to be robbed in times of peace and to be killed in times of war. Every once in a

while, to be sure, they were permitted to select governors and senators and presidents and other officers to rule over them. But their teachers taught them to select the wrong men. Men who were friendly to the rich masters, and not to the poor toilers. And these men who were chosen to be the rulers of the people lied to them and said, "It is God's will that the poor should toil for the benefit of the rich." And they made laws to protect the rich against the poor and the strong against the weak. It was like making laws to protect the eagle against the sparrow and the savage hunter against the wounded stag.

And that is why the rich kept on getting richer and the poor, poorer all the time. Debs could see the reason for it all as plainly as if it had been written in fiery syllables on the walls of his cell. The world was sick, and it needed to be cured of its sickness!

Yes, but how was it to be cured? What must the toilers do in order to free themselves from the chains of their poverty? What steps must they take in order to drive hunger and disease and death away from their dismal homes?

And little by little, as he sat thinking in his lonely cell, he got an answer to these questions, too. All that it was necessary to do was to stand up and to say to

GENE DEBS IN HIS
LAST DAYS

the toilers: — "Open your eyes! Shake out of your hearts the stupid sleep of centuries. Look about you and see the great green earth spread out like a banquet before your eyes. It is yours, every bit of it! Look at the table cloths of green grass, and see how they have been adorned with trees and flowers for your sake and heaped with a profusion of grains and vegetables and fruits of every description. See, they are yours for the asking! All you have to do from now on is to *take* whatever you *make*. You are the workers. You have toiled and sweated and hungered to produce all the good things of the world. It is to you, and to nobody else, that these things belong. If the masters want their share, let them become toilers like yourselves and *work* for it.

"Open your eyes and learn your rights! *Take whatever you make.* Not by cheating, and not by force of arms, but by sending your own brothers, toilers from among your own ranks, into the City Halls and the State Houses and the White House of the Nation!"

This is what he would teach them. And how easy it would be for them to understand it, he thought! Even a child could grasp an idea like that. *Take whatever you make.* Could anything be simpler?

And yet, when Debs was released from jail and tried to teach this simple truth to his comrades, only a few could understand him. The rest pointed their fingers at him and cried, "Beware of him. He's a Socialist!" A good many foolish people, you know, are very much afraid of such names as *Socialist* or *Communist* or *Pacifist* or *Anarchist*. They have an idea that all those who bear such names are monsters with red noses on their faces and with red horns growing out of their foreheads. They call them *Traitors* and *Slackers* and *Foreigners* and *Reds*, and if they could only get a chance, they would stab them all in the back. But that is because most of us are very stupid, and we do not understand the real meanings of words. If we did, then we should all be able to realize that a *Socialist* or a *Communist* or an *Anarchist* or a *Pacifist* is merely a man who loves his fellow-men more than he loves money.

Now there is nothing frightful in that, is there? And yet, when Debs became a Socialist, many people began to look upon him as if he were a wild creature of the jungle. He was guilty of the sin of possessing too much love for mankind, and because of this he was set down as a violent radical. He held out a heal-

ing cup for the ills of his suffering brothers, and for this they were ready to crucify him. . .

For the stupidity of men is almost unbelievable!

22

Gene Tries to Educate the American People

FOR TWENTY YEARS after he was released from jail, Eugene Debs tried to educate the stupidity out of the human heart. The circle of his followers grew, but oh, so slowly! A hundred thousand comrades, five hundred thousand, and then a million rallied around his battle cry for justice. But the rest of the country went right ahead with its insane business of making money at the expense of human happiness and human life. Bankers and manufacturers went to prize fights, in order to learn the "gentle" art of knocking out those poor devils who happen to be weaker than yourself. Statesmen amused themselves by hunting helpless animals in the forests, and when they got sick of this game, they went off to shoot helpless human creatures in foreign countries. They gave beautiful names to these beastly pastimes, calling them "Competition," and "Sport," and "War." But in reality, all these pastimes were

but different forms of the self-same savage game of murder.

In other words, the whole nation was like a huge insane asylum, and only a few, now and then, listened to such men as Eugene Debs and regained their sanity. Presidents came and went, and the human heart remained as stupid and as barbarous as ever. The handful of people who kept their senses amidst all this madness tried again and again to elect Eugene Debs to the presidency of the United States. But what could a handful of people do against a whole nation of lunatics? God had sent down an angel to rule them, and instead they chose William McKinley, a man who had a record as a "war-president." That was in 1900. Again, in 1904, a little handful of loving comrades tried to send Debs to the White House. Once more God was offering to the people of the United States the finest type of manhood that it was in his power to make, and once more they spurned him and elected Theodore Roosevelt, a soldier who was famous for shooting animals in the jungle and for killing men on the battlefield. And Colonel Roosevelt, true to his profession, tried to turn all the youngsters of America into brutal hunters and ferocious soldiers. He spent millions of dollars on guns

and battleships, and he put trained military men into the high schools of the country to teach the little boys how to shoot bullets and to stick bayonets into their brothers who lived across the sea.

And in the meantime, the working people of America suffered on.

In 1908 the few men who still retained their senses tried once more to elect Eugene Debs to the presidency of the United States. But again he was defeated. Five million workingmen were dying of hunger, but the nation went right ahead spending most of its money on the army and the navy. For the chief business of the country was not the business of learning how to feed the hungry people of America, but the more savage business of learning how to kill the harmless people of other nations. "Let the riff-raff of our country die of hunger!" thought these politicians. "Let their children be crushed like blades of wheat under the hailstorm! Who cares? Who can spare the time to attend to them? There is more important work to be done. More and more guns must be manufactured for the boy-scouts and the soldiers! More and still more battleships must be built to patrol the seas!"

For the men who ruled the country were blinded

by ambition and didn't know what they were doing. They were not bad men, to be sure, but the fire of human sympathy, poor fellows, flickered but dimly within their hearts. They had a queer idea about life. They believed that the world, with everything in it, had been created for the strong. As for the weak, God must have made a serious blunder when he brought them into the world, according to the opinion of these fellows, and the sooner they were thrust off the face of the earth, the better it would be for everybody.

And so these stupid rulers of the nation did their best to correct God's mistake and to crush the life out of their weaker brothers and sisters. And Eugene Debs looked on at all this, and his heart bled within him. And so once more, in 1912, he consented to be the standard-bearer of the workers.

This time, too, he was defeated. For the nation was still asleep. Woodrow Wilson, a professor from Princeton who decided to become a politician, was elected president. Beware of a professor who goes into politics! A man who is willing to exchange the innocent company of college youngsters for the society of congressmen and senators is not to be trusted. Woodrow Wilson was a silent, ambitious, and obstinate old man. He loved peace, but he loved Woodrow

Wilson even more than he loved peace. He kept making speeches and writing books about the cruelty of war, and at the same time he allowed the soldiers to be trained to kill and the ship-builders to build more and more battleships.

And in the meantime the politicians and the business men of other nations, too, were talking about peace and preparing for war. England was secretly plotting to rob Germany. Germany was plotting to rob France. France was plotting to rob Austria. Austria was plotting to rob Turkey. Turkey was plotting to rob England. And so on and on and on, all the way around the weary circle of the earth. For the rulers of the nations were like so many gangs of silly schoolboys, each of them with a chip on his shoulder and with a bundle of firecrackers in his hand. Why? Because each of them was greedy, and wanted to have more than his rightful share of the good things of the earth. As if the earth were not full of good things for everybody, — if people only knew how to distribute them properly!

And so the emperors and the generals of the world, decked out in their gaudy uniforms, went marching down the way of death until they reached that fatal midsummer day in 1914. On that day

Germany and England and France and the other uncivilized nations of Europe went mad and tried to set the whole world on fire. And before the fire was put out, twenty-five million boys were killed, and twenty-five millions of others were crippled, either physically or morally, for the rest of their lives.

Oh, what a black day it was for a creature with a sensitive human soul to live in! May you never, my little comrades, be compelled to go through another such nightmare of murder! For four years the world went mad. To love your fellow-creatures who lived in other countries was considered an act of high treason. To refuse to kill your brothers was a crime for which they sent you to prison or shot you down in cold blood. Wherever you went, you heard people uttering savage cries of hatred. Like beasts of the jungle they kept snarling at their own kindred. Everybody was spied upon. If anyone dared to express a human thought, he was reported to the government and locked up with criminals. Men walked about the streets like wolves, ready to spring upon those who dared to utter a gentle word. The whole world had become one vast insane asylum, and those that were the maddest were allowed to govern the rest and to lead them on to destruction.

Such was the state of affairs from 1914 to 1918. And yet, throughout this nightmare of insanity, there were in every nation a few noble souls who dared to raise their voice against the bloodshed of their brothers. They were willing to be called slackers and to suffer disgrace and imprisonment, and even death if necessary, for remaining human in the midst of a jungle of mad beasts.

And this brings us to the last and saddest and most glorious period in the life of Eugene Debs, whom an insane world called "a dangerous criminal" because he refused to kill his fellow-men.

23

Gene Debs and the World War

FOR THREE YEARS after the World War began, the United States tried its best to keep out of it. But at last, in 1917, Mr. Wilson, like the rest of the world, lost his senses and compelled his nation to plunge into the river of blood.

There have been many reasons given why the United States entered the World War. But the one thing to remember is this: There never yet has been a good reason for *any* war. Reason and war are as far apart as the sun and the darkness of the night. Let men only begin to reason, and there will no longer be any need of war in this stupid old world of ours.

War is insanity. No man in his right senses will have anything to do with it. Whoever believes in war is on the verge of insanity. Whoever *takes part* in war has gone hopelessly insane. This is exactly what happened to the United States in 1917. The

country went hopelessly insane. It was as if the inmates of a lunatic asylum had been suddenly let loose, with bombs in their hands. Nobody was safe. The nation was caught up in a whirlpool of madness, and woe unto those who refused to be carried away with the rest! The politicians and the generals of the nation took the peaceful young boys and turned them into murderers. They took the school teachers and turned them into liars. And they took the priests and the rabbis and turned them into blustering bullies.

For the people do not want war. They have to be bullied and lied and driven into it against their will. And if, in spite of all this, they still refuse to fight against their brothers, they are thrown into prison where they are allowed to die like rats.

In 1917 thousands of young men went to jail because they had a horror for killing, and thousands of others were spied upon and persecuted because they expressed their sympathy for these imprisoned youngsters to whom life was more sacred than a gun. It was high time for a heroic soul to cry "Peace, be still!" to the red waves of insanity that were threatening to submerge the world. And Debs, always ready to do the heroic thing, took up the challenge. He was already an old man. He had earned his rest.

He was not at all well. For over ten years he had been suffering from heart disease. He might easily have stepped aside and allowed some other and younger man to take up the fight. But that was not the way of Debs.

For weariness and discouragement and disease meant nothing to Debs when there was a wrong to be righted. He saw a nation dragged like a drove of helpless cattle into the shambles. A few men had declared the war. These men possessed no imagination and therefore they had no idea of the crime that they were committing. They stood on the street corners and shouted that an army would spring up over night to sail against the enemy. But the army did *not* spring up over night. Nobody wanted to kill his brothers. The army had to be *conscripted*. The young boys had to be *torn away* from the arms of their weeping mothers. The fathers of children had to be *forced against their will* to slay the fathers of other children.

When they marched out of their homes to go against the enemy, the drum and the bugle tried to drown out the cries of those who were left behind. But Eugene Debs could hear them. He could hear the wailing of the mothers who were robbed of their

young. He could hear the frightened questionings of the little ones who opened their eyes in astonishment and wanted to know why their fathers should be taken away from them when they needed all their care and all their love at home.

One day Debs watched a company of soldiers marching off to the training camp. The flags waved boisterously in the breeze, the bugles screeched like raucous birds of prey, and the drums beat a treacherous tattoo of lies about the glory of war. As Debs looked on, he thought of a similar parade that he had read about in the books. His eyes pierced backward into the early history of the human race, when people were still savage and did many hateful and despicable things to one another. He saw a barbarian city in the East. A procession of boys and girls marched through the streets. They were going to the temple of Moloch, the god who demanded a yearly sacrifice of little children. Amidst the drunken shouts of the people and the beating of drums the children were marching to their death.

He saw the procession reaching the outskirts of the city, where the temple of Moloch lay waiting to devour the children like a poisonous dragon. The procession marched inside. The shouting of the people

and the beating of the drums was now deafening. It drowned out every other noise. It absorbed like a sponge the terrified shrieks of the little children who were about to be hurled into the fiery jaws of Moloch.

The spectacle was so sickening that Debs shut it away from his eyes and his mind. Such savagery was possible only thousands of years ago, when human beings were as yet little better than the wild beasts of the forests.

And yet, here in the United States, in 1917, he saw the self-same scene enacted all over again. The children of the nation were being sacrificed to the God of War. Amidst the mad blare of bugles they were marching to their death. What had come over the hearts of men to turn them into such unreasoning wild creatures? How could they bear to see their own children dragged away to be sacrificed on the altar of war? How could these young boys allow themselves to be taken out of their homes and to go off like an unprotesting flock of sheep to the slaughter-house? *Left, right, left, right, left, right!* An endless column of men marching out of life down into the blackness of death. The officer who marched at the head of the column was a mere boy. How beau-

tiful he looked, and how full of life! A young girl, who seemed to be not more than fifteen, rushed out of the throng of spectators on the sidewalk and threw a garland of daisies over his head. He smiled at her and saluted her with his sword. He marched along with the garland dangling over one side of his hat. He reminded Debs of a young bullock in the Roman days of old, with its horns gilded and with a garland of fresh flowers thrown over its forehead as it was being led to the sacrifice.

Helpless victims being led to the sacrifice! That's what they were, these young recruits marching along so gaily down the streets. And the foolish crowd cheered away, while the mothers and the wives and the children wept and wondered what was the meaning of it all.

And Eugene Debs looked on, and with his mind's eye he saw the very end of this pitiable parade. He saw a battlefield in France. He saw the earth scattered with the swollen bodies of dead men. He saw thousands of flies buzzing and clustering about these bodies and fighting over them. He saw wounded boys lying under the scorching sun, unable to move their heads or to turn their eyes away from the sight of their dead comrades. He saw men screaming and

writhing as they hung in agony on the barbed wire fences. He saw young boys with their lungs shot away, their eyes torn out, and their faces beaten into black shapeless masses of powder and dust and blood.

All this he saw, and much more. He saw a battlefield at night. A company of soldiers had entrenched themselves in a clump of bushes. The enemy, unable to drive them out of this position, had set fire to it. The whole grove flared up like a gigantic torch in the darkness. The soldiers scattered from it like a swarm of frightened insects. That is, those of them that could escape. The rest of them, wounded and unable to move, were being roasted alive in the clump of burning bushes. Piteous cries for help came out of the flames. Right on the edge of the burning shrubbery lay a dying soldier. His head and his beard were singed by the flames, and the sickening smell of burning flesh rose up to the heavens from the savage altar of the battlefield.

A little to one side of this man lay a poor fellow with the upper part of his body paralyzed. In his agony he kept digging his heel again and again into the earth as he lay stretched on his back. Another dragged himself on the ground like a wounded animal, leaving a trail of blood behind him. One man

lay sprawled across a fallen trunk. The upper part of his skull had been shot away, and his brains kept oozing out like a thick gruel from a broken dish.

The fire was dying down. In the ashes lay the roasted bodies of a hundred men. It was almost daylight now. A bird began to call from a near-by grove. A dog, coming from God knows where, tugged at the entrails of a wounded officer. The fellow was still alive, but he was too far gone to drive the dog away. He lay moannig feebly as the dog kept tearing away at his still living body. . .

And the mothers of all these young boys whom their country had so brutally murdered sat patiently at home and waited for the day of their return. . .

This is what Eugene Debs saw as he watched the parade of the soldiers. Oh, if the rest of them could only see it! Why were their eyes blinded by the fever of hatred and the madness of war?

Left, right, left, right, left, right! Couldn't they see, these people who cheered the parading soldiers, that they were watching the death march of their own children? Didn't they realize that they, and they alone, were responsible for the murder of these helpless boys?

And he made up his mind that he would open their

eyes. He would stand up in their midst and cry out to them that they were murderers! Murderers of their own children! He would speak to the patriots who had declared the war and tell them that they were criminals! He would speak to the politicians of the country and tell them that they were savages and madmen! And he would speak to the young boys and tell them that it was a beautiful and heroic thing to refuse to kill their brothers at the command of a few scoundrels and criminals and fools!

This is what he would tell his countrymen! He knew that the nation was full of spies and that his speeches would be reported to the government. But his duty lay clear before him. If his American brothers were willing to punish him because he loved them too dearly to see them die, very well, he was quite ready to take his punishment. He was ready, if need be, to be crucified for reminding a savage world that killing is a crime, always and everywhere, in war as well as in peace.

And it was not long, indeed, before the spies had him arrested and brought to trial. He was a man who hated murder in time of war. And that, in their eyes, was an unpardonable sin for which he must pay the full penalty of the law.

24

The Way of Peace Leads to a Prison Cell

It was in Canton, Ohio, that Debs made the speech for which he was arrested. He didn't say much. He merely told his audience that he loved the American boys and that it broke his heart to see them die in a senseless war. He wasn't afraid to go to jail for his ideals, he said. "I would rather a thousand times be a free soul in jail," he exclaimed, "than a hypocrite or a coward on the streets!"

He then went on to remind his audience that the war was not of their own choosing. "In all the history of the world," he said, "you, the people, have never had a voice in declaring war, and strange as it certainly appears, no war by any nation in any age has ever been declared by the people. . .

"Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. The strong have always tried to rob the weak. The masters have always declared the war. They never did any of the fighting. They

have always sent the workers to fight for them. . .

"The masters alone declare war and they alone make peace. They have everything to gain and nothing to lose. You, the workers, have nothing to gain and everything to lose — especially your lives. . .

"The masters alone decide whether or not you shall live or allow yourselves to be slaughtered. They say to you, in the words of that foolish old poet,

'Yours not to reason why,
Yours but to do and die.'

"That is their motto, and we object on the part of the awakening workers of the nation! We object to being murdered! We object to murdering the citizens of other countries! We have no quarrel against them. We do not hate them. They are our brothers. We would freely give them a cup of water if they needed it. There is no room in our hearts for hate. We do not hate anybody. We have nothing but love and pity even for those who would harm us or imprison us or put us to death. . .

"We do not even hate the pitiable cowards who have declared the war. Poor fellows, they do not know any better. . .

"They call us traitors because we are opposed to their bloodshed and murder. But I say to you, be true

to yourself and you cannot be a traitor to any good cause on earth. . .

"They are trying to send us to prison for speaking our minds. Very well, let them. I tell you that if it had not been for the men and the women who in the past have had the moral courage to go to prison, we would still be in the jungles. . .

"I for one am not afraid to go to jail. To me it is a great honor to suffer for being in the right. I am willing, if need be, to stand alone. Let the patriots shout for war. It is my duty to tell you that war is a crime. It is my duty to point out to you that they have no right to slaughter you. You need to know that you are not beasts. You need to know that you have not been created for murder. You need to know that you are fit for something better, something nobler than slavery and cannon-fodder. It is time for you to proclaim your rights. It is time for you to recognize the brotherhood of all mankind. It is high time for all of you to adopt a new motto for the civilized nations of the world: —

"Yours now to ask the reason why,
And to *refuse* to kill and die!"

When Debs spoke these sublime words to his comrades in Ohio, there was a spy in the audience who

copied down the speech. He reported it to the government and Debs was arrested. Two months later he went on trial. He knew even before the trial that he would be convicted. But he faced the future calmly. It was no new experience for him to be locked up in a cell, and he was not afraid of it.

Throughout the trial Debs was cool, gentle, and self-possessed. When the District Attorney finished his opening speech against him, Debs leaned across the table at which they were all sitting and complimented his enemy for having made so excellent a speech.

Later on, when the spy reported to the jury the words that Debs had spoken at Canton, Debs looked on with a smile of tender pity. He was such a young, helpless looking creature, this little fellow whom the government had compelled to swoop down like a bird of prey upon his own brothers! The poor boy was almost in tears when he finished.

There was a ten-minute recess after this young fellow's testimony. Debs walked to the back of the court room where the wretched youngster was sitting and patted him on the head. "Don't feel bad about it, my boy," he said, "you have only done your duty."

The trial was over in a short time, for Debs had nothing to deny and he had nothing to take back. He was allowed to speak a few words to the jury before sentence was passed upon him. Standing up to his full height, he spoke to them in a voice that was fearless and steady. Yet there was an infinite tenderness, too, in that voice. The tenderness of a father who is willing to lay down his life for his wayward children.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," he said, "I am accused of having obstructed the war. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose the war if I stood alone. When I think of a cold, glittering steel bayonet being plunged in the white, quivering flesh of a human being, I recoil with horror. . .

"Men talk about holy wars. There are none. War is the trade of unholy savages and barbarians. . .

"Gentlemen of the Jury, I am accused of being unpatriotic. I object to that accusation. It is not true. I believe in patriotism. I have never uttered a word against the flag. I love the flag as a symbol of freedom. . .

"I believe, however, in a wider patriotism. Thomas Paine said, 'My country is the world. To do good is my religion'. That is the sort of patriotism I believe

in. I am an Internationalist. I believe that nations have been pitted against nations long enough in hatred, in strife, in warfare. I believe there ought to be a bond of unity between all of these nations. I believe that the human race consists of one great family. I love the people of this country, but I don't hate the people of any country on earth. I refuse to hate a human being because he happens to be born in some other country. Why should I? Like myself, he is the image of his creator. I would infinitely rather serve him and love him than to hate him and kill him. . .

"Yes, I am opposed to killing him. I am opposed to war. I am perfectly willing on that account to be branded as a traitor. And if it is a crime under the American law to be opposed to human bloodshed, I am perfectly willing to be branded as a criminal and to end my days in a prison cell. . .

"And now, Gentlemen of the Jury, I am prepared for the sentence. I will accept your verdict. What you will do to me does not matter much. Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest of earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there

is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

Greater words than these have never been spoken by the lips of man. And yet they fell upon deaf ears. How could they understand him, those lawyers and judges and jurymen whose ears were attuned to the thunder of the cannon and the beating of the drum? How could they listen to his golden song of peace when a hurricane of hatred was sweeping through their hearts? His words impressed them no more than the singing of a skylark would impress a horde of fighting wolves. They found him guilty of sedition and sentenced him to ten years in the penitentiary. And the people of the nation went about their work and never bowed their heads in shame that so great a crime against a man like Debs could have been committed in their midst!

25

Starting on The Long Journey

DEBS APPEALED from his prison sentence to the Supreme Court of the United States. He was allowed to go home and to stay there until the Supreme Court could come to a decision.

Debs had very little hope, of course, that his appeal would be granted. And he was right. The Supreme Court, like the lower court in Ohio, finally decided against him.

He accepted the decision of the Supreme Court with his usual courage, and he held himself ready for the call.

It came on a Saturday morning in the early spring. Debs was reading a book at the time. His wife was preparing dinner in the next room. The telephone bell rang.

"Hello, is this Mr. Debs?" came from the other end of the wire.

"Yes."

"This is Mr. Wertz, the District Attorney of Cleveland, speaking. I'm sorry, Mr. Debs, but you'll have to get ready to surrender yourself to the government. They're to take you at once to Moundsville Prison."

"Thank you, Mr. Wertz, I'll be right along," said Debs as he hung up the receiver.

He went into the next room and broke the news as gently as he could to his wife. Brave as she was, she couldn't keep back her tears. But he took her into his arms and ran his feeble hand over her gray head and comforted her. "Don't worry, Kate dear," he said. "Just keep a stiff upper lip, you and all the others that are left behind, and I shall be quite all right there."

He began to pack up the few things that he would need in the prison. His wife and his brother Theodore helped him. All day long a flock of special delivery letters and telegrams kept coming into the house. They were messages of admiration and of hope from his friends and comrades in every corner of the land.

A number of his admirers in Terre Taute were planning to hold a parade in his honor before he left. But Debs asked them to call it off. "I just want to

slip out quietly now," he said. "When I come back—perhaps that will be the time."

It was nine o'clock in the evening when Debs left his home for the railroad station. He was accompanied by his wife, his brother, and a few intimate friends. It was an exquisite night in April. The earth was a floating garden filled with the whisperings of new life. The very stars seemed to have descended from their high places and were crowding around the earth to listen to the April music. The moon sat in her ebony castle in the sky. She was a white-robed magician sprinkling a shower of silver rain over the enchanted garden of the earth. The trees stretched themselves up into the air and caught the magic foam of her light upon the uplifted palms of their hands. And in the midst of all this walked a sad old man, thinking to himself that he was looking upon a free and beautiful world for the last time perhaps. For he was already sixty-four years old, and he hardly expected that he would ever come out of the prison alive. . .

This is what he thought to himself. But to his companions he breathed never a word of it all. Instead he laughed and joked with them as if he were about to embark on a sight-seeing trip around the world.

They came to the station. Although he had asked the people of Terre Haute to let him slip out as quietly as possible, nevertheless there were over two hundred comrades waiting at the station to give him a final hand-clasp before he left. As soon as they saw Debs they surrounded him. One of them, a miner who towered above the rest, put his big, toil-hardened hand upon Gene's arm. There was a mist of tears in his eyes as he said: "We're with you, Gene, —by God, we're with you to the last man!"

"I know it," replied Debs, embracing him and kissing his brow. "Until the last drop we'll stand together, you and I and all the rest of the comrades. You boys take care of the outside and I'll take care of the inside!"

A loud cheer answered these words. He walked slowly down the platform, greeting his comrades and shaking their hands.

The train pulled into the station. As Debs mounted the steps, a Pullman porter tipped his cap to him. Debs answered the salute and took off his own hat. In the twinkling of an eye everybody in the crowd stood with bared head, even the women removing their hats while the tears flowed freely down their cheeks.

A young girl pushed her way through the crowd. She reached the steps of the car where Gene was standing. Pulling a red flower from her bosom, she threw it to Debs while the crowd wept and laughed and cheered.

A brakeman swung his lantern as a signal for the train to start. Another cheer, louder than ever, and the train that was carrying Debs to prison pulled out of the station.

The sound of the train died away in the distance, and silence and darkness fell upon the city of Terre Haute and the home of Eugene Debs.

26

The End of the Journey

THE PRISON TRAIN arrived in Cleveland at five o'clock in the morning. Debs had been able to sleep but an hour the night before, but they gave him very little time to rest now before they bundled him into an automobile and rushed him away on the next stage of his journey to the prison. Those that torture and crucify the saviors of the human race are always anxious to do their work in a hurry. They do not dare to stop and think what they are doing.

They sped him through the city streets as though they were trying to run away from some crime that they had committed. For an hour they tortured his feeble body in this mad race until at last they came to a railroad station in the suburbs.

Here they changed for another train and hurried him on to Youngstown, which was the next stage of the journey. Once during this trip Debs turned to the sheriff who was taking him to jail. "What's your great hurry, my friend?" he said with a twinkle in

his eye. "You know we've got ten years in which to get there."

When they arrived at Youngstown, a little boy of twelve ran up to Debs and threw himself into his arms. "I bring you a message, comrade Debs," he said. "A message from the children of America to the best friend they have ever had."

"I know that the children love me," said Debs gently, "for I love them, too."

But this was no time for gentle words. For they must hurry him on to his punishment. They took him aboard a trolley car, and now began the last stage of the weary and nerve-racking journey to the prison. All day long he was hustled from one trolley car into another. It never seemed to occur to them that he was a sick old man whose body was probably tormented with pain to receive such inhuman treatment. Yet never a word of complaint escaped from his lips.

He tried to bear his torture with a smile. But at last, late in the afternoon, he was so exhausted that he could hold up his head no longer. Little by little it bent toward his breast and his eyes closed in a sweet forgetfulness of his suffering.

The trolley rocked and bumped and jostled its

way along the tracks. It droned like a big yellow bumblebee through the gathering twilight. To the right of the tracks the blue thread of the Ohio River coiled itself slowly around the spools of the Allegheny foothills.

The car stopped and a young couple boarded it. They were returning home from a picnic in the woods. They noticed the huddled figure of the tall old man sleeping in front of them. His head was swaying from side to side with every jolt of the car. "I wonder who he is," whispered the girl to her companion. "He has such a sweet and beautiful face, hasn't he?"

"He's probably some grandfather going on a visit to his grandchildren," said the young man.

"No, you're mistaken," said a farmer who sat next to the young couple. "It's Eugene Debs, and they're taking him to prison."

For a time the young man made no reply to this. He seemed to be trying to figure out something in his own mind. At last he turned to the girl and said, "Some day I think the world will have to answer for this!". . .

It was long after dark when the car arrived at Moundsville. The prison rose up before them out of

the night. Its black towers were uplifted like threatening fists against the sky. Its evil face was punctured by little sickly lights that broke through the grated windows like yellow sores upon a leper's skin.

The trolley car stopped at the gate. Debs took his heavy grip and walked inside. The doors clanked shut behind him. They took him down a narrow corridor and locked him into a cell.

The other prisoners had already gone to bed. Save for the scurrying of a rat now and then, there was not a sound in the cells that stretched like rows of living graves on either side of the corridor.

Debs took off his clothes and lay down on the iron bed. He was tired and he wanted to sleep. He closed his eyes.

But it was some time before he could fall asleep. They had locked his poor old bones into this cage of steel and granite. But his thoughts were abroad. They embraced the whole wide world as his exhausted body lay stretched out upon the hard mattress. Little did they suspect, those poor simpletons who had jailed him, that the freest soul on earth that night was the soul of their new prisoner, Eugene Debs!

27

The Song of the Prisoners

DEBS WAS TREATED with a good deal of kindness at Moundsville. The warden of the jail was a considerate man. He recognized, to some extent at least, the beauty of Debs' character and he dealt with him accordingly. He allowed Debs to work in the prison hospital, and many a sick prisoner had occasion to thank heaven that the stupidity of mankind had sent this holy man to the Moundsville Prison.

This state of affairs, however, lasted only two months. The jailers of the nation, for reasons best known to themselves, decided to transfer Debs to another prison, many hundreds of miles away.

Again they took his broken-down old body and tortured it from one train to another until at last they locked him up in the Federal Prison at Atlanta, Georgia.

Debs felt that there really was no excuse for this

last outburst of cruelty directed against him. As usual, however, he made no complaint. Let them do whatever they liked to break his body. His soul remained always like an unbroken cup filled with a great joy. For it was a sweet and noble thing to him to be persecuted for the sake of truth.

But his strength was dropping away from him day by day. The warden of the new prison had very little sympathy for men like Debs. He treated him no better than the rest of the prisoners. And, indeed, Debs felt no resentment about his own treatment. For he didn't consider himself better than any of the other prisoners. But he did wonder at the stupidity and the savagery which men showed to their own brothers in distress. The inmates of the jail were not vicious. They were merely sick. They had diseased minds and crippled hearts. They were no more to blame for it than a hunchback is to be blamed for having a twisted spine, or a consumptive for having wounded lungs. Some of them, to be sure, had minds that were incurably ill. But so, too, do many invalids have bodies that are sick beyond hope. Would you take these invalids and throw them into a black hole of stone and steel because they suffer from a disease that may possibly be passed on to others if they are allowed to go

free? And would you take a cripple and shut him up into an airless vault because the poor devil's spine is twisted or his eyes are blind? On the contrary, you would give him the best of your care in order to bring him back to health. And if it should so happen that his disease is incurable and his presence therefore is a menace to society, you would put him out of the way, of course. Not in a prison cell, however, but in a hospital, amidst pleasant surroundings, where skillful doctors and kind-hearted nurses would try to bring comfort to his aching body and peace into his embittered heart.

And yet the jailers of their fellow-men took these poor wretches with diseased minds, and in order to heal them of their disease, they thrust them like cattle into stalls that were unbearably hot in the summer and unbearably cold in the winter. Sometimes they locked five or six of them together in a cell that was but little bigger than a dog-kennel, where the air was fouler than the air of a slaughterhouse, where the filth and the vermin tortured them in the daytime and the rats scurried over their faces and bodies when they tried to sleep at night.

One day Debs was awaiting his turn to take a bath in the rusty old iron bath-tub that all the prisoners

had to use one after another. The tub was so filthy it almost turned his stomach to look at it. A white-haired Negro was sitting in it and trying to wash the dirt and the vermin away from his tortured old body. He turned on the faucet to get a little extra water, but the prison-guard, who stood always by like a watch-dog, jumped upon him with a curse. "Turn off that water, you black devil! Don't you know that water costs more than niggers?"

When Debs saw this, he realized that indeed the life of a black prisoner, or of any prisoner, for that matter, was held more cheaply than the dirty water that flowed into a prison bath-tub. For you have to pay money for every drop of water that you use up. But who is ever going to ask you to pay for the lives of the prisoners that are broken to bits in the dark cells and then are cast away and forgotten as though they had never been born?

And so Debs suffered intensely during all these months in Atlanta. Not because of his own tortures, but because of the tortures that he saw inflicted upon his brothers. And he did all he could to make their unhappy lot a little less bitter for them. It was surprising how much a kind word or a little thoughtful act meant to them. It came upon their hardened souls

like a shower of soft rain or a flood of golden sunlight. The jailers who had put Debs into prison thought that they did it because he was a source of danger to those who lived beyond the prison walls. But they were wrong. Without knowing it themselves, they put him there because he was a blessing to those who lived *within* the prison walls. He was needed there, and that is why the unseen powers of life had put him there. Sometimes it seems to me, you know, that the whole world is a prison, and that men like Debs, who really deserve a much better fate than to be born into our midst, are nevertheless sent here to soften the bitterness and to lighten the loads of the rest of us, his fellow-convicts in the prison-house of life.

And the more gentle of the convicts looked upon Debs as their teacher, their brother, and their savior. Whenever they went into the prison-yard to take their exercise, they clustered about him for comfort, like a lot of whipped and unhappy school-children. For they *were* only school-children, unable to learn the difficult lessons of life. And because they were not so clever as their more fortunate companions, they were treated as if they were no better than vicious dogs.

But then, too, there were in this jail a number of prisoners who had been locked up for crimes similar to the one which Debs himself had committed. That is, they were Conscientious Objectors, men who refused to kill their brothers in war. Or else they were Communists or Anarchists, men who believed that a workingman ought to get enough bread for his children. And for these crimes they were condemned to spend their days behind prison bars. Often, during their hours of exercise in the yard, they grouped themselves around Debs and talked with him about their bitter experiences in the past or discussed with him their splendid dreams for the future.

One day in the late summer this group of prisoners was sitting in the yard and making conversation about this, that and the other thing. It was about six o'clock in the afternoon. A big red sun was marching down to its setting. The sky was a huge prison-yard fenced in by the horizon, and the clouds were dark-robed prisoners let out from their cells for a few hours' relaxation.

From somewhere beyond the walls of the Atlanta prison came the call of a bird. He was reminding the winged congregation that it was time for their final service to the setting sun. One by one the other birds

took up the call, until the air was deluged with the song of their evening prayer.

The singing of the birds must have fallen like a seed into the heart of one of the prisoners, a young Conscientious Objector who sat next to Debs. For he began to hum, faintly at first, the music of the Marseillaise. Two or three others joined him as he came near the end of the song. Like slender silver rivulets of sound their voices blended and trickled away through the twilight.

Their song was finished, and for a time there was silence among the prisoners. An invisible orchestra of insects was playing somewhere at their back. Overhead, a swallow was flying in a circle around the tower of the prison. His wings opened and shut like a scissors, cutting the blue air into all sorts of fantastic shapes and patterns.

The silence of the prisoners was broken at last by the gentle voice of Eugene Debs. "Comrades," he murmured, "what do you say to our singing the International?" And without waiting for an answer, he started the first stanza.

Softly at first rose the music out of his heart. Soon another took it up, and then another and still another, until at last the words came like a voice of thunder

from the prisoners' lips. Even the guards after a time joined in the chorus, although most of them understood neither the words nor the music of this universal song of freedom. The joyous waves of sound dashed back and forth around the walls of the prison yard, until the very stones seemed to become alive and to fling the triumphant words of the International out of their granite throats.

"*'Tis the final conflict, let each stand in his place*
The International Party shall be the human race."

Again they repeated these inspiring words, and a great light from within came and illumined their faces, and the guards wondered why the features of these prisoners had suddenly become like the features of free men and their eyes had begun to glow like the eyes of living gods!

For they did not know, these jailers and guards and turnkeys, that they had just heard the sacred song of human brotherhood, and that they were looking upon the faces of men lighted up with the sun of a future day! A day when prisons and hatred and bloodshed would be no more, a day of forgiveness and justice and peace, a day when at last the nations of the earth would hurl their deadly weapons away

from them and leave their hands and their hearts free for the worldwide embrace of comradeship, of life and of love!

But the day of freedom was not yet. For the present these poor souls must go back to their cells. It was growing dark now. The sun had gone out of the sky and the shadows once more fell upon the faces of the prisoners. One by one, like cattle returning from the fields at the close of day, they were locked each into his own gloomy stall.

Another long night began for Debs and his comrades. They must be patient yet. They must wait and work in the darkness for a long time to come, filing away the iron bars of hatred that imprisoned the human heart.

But Debs knew that the darkness would not last forever. *He* could already see the coming of the new day of freedom. If only he could make the others see!

28

The Last Days of His Life

DEBS was growing weaker every day. His friends appealed to President Wilson to set him free. The war was over now, and there was no reason, therefore, to keep him in jail any longer. But old Mr. Wilson was stubborn, as usual. He believed in rubbing it in. He paid no attention to the sensible pleading of Debs' friends and Debs had to stay on in prison. His body became like a shattered vessel drifting rapidly down the tide toward the whirlpool of death. But Mr. Wilson remained as obstinate as ever.

In 1920, however, Mr. Wilson's term as President of the United States came to an end. Warren G. Harding was elected in his place. Now Mr. Harding, like all the rest of us, had many faults, but somewhere in his heart there lay hidden a spark of real human tenderness. In the spring of 1921 he sent for Debs and instructed his attorney-general to have an

interview with him. And let it be remembered to Harding's credit that he allowed Debs to travel from Atlanta to Washington all by himself. He knew that a man like Debs needed no sheriffs or marshalls or jailers to watch him in order that he might not escape.

Debs came to Washington and had an interview with the attorney-general. And then, just as he had come, he returned to prison without an escort.

It seemed for a time as if the interview had been in vain. For Debs stayed on in prison until the end of that year. At last, however, just before Christmas, he received word from President Harding that he was pardoned.

Eugene Debs was once more a free man. But he was no longer a citizen of the United States. His freedom was restored to him, but not his citizenship. From now on, he was a man without a country. And yet his tormentors, without knowing it, had paid him the greatest compliment possible when they deprived him of his citizenship in the United States. For, by doing this, they made him a citizen of the world. All the members of the human race were thus officially recognized to be his brothers and his countrymen.

It was in December, 1921, when he was released

from prison. He had spent almost a thousand days behind closed doors. Is it any wonder that his health was now ruined beyond repair? A garment that is moth-eaten in the darkness can never be made whole again.

But his life was still a flame that would not be quenched, and his courage was a precious metal that no amount of suffering could ever tarnish. They had broken down his health. But they could not break down his spirit. After a few months at a sanitarium, he began once more to travel about the country, bringing everywhere the message of his hope like a cup of fresh water to the thirsty. His aching body cried out for rest. But there could be no rest for him. The red beast of hatred was raging yet in the heart of men. The world war was over, to be sure, but the winds of injustice and jealousy and prejudice and oppression were still sweeping over the earth. In Poland and in Austria thousands of Jews were massacred because they had not had the good sense to be born Christians. In the southern states of America Negroes were lynched because they hadn't as yet discovered a way to make their skins white. And in the mining districts of Pennsylvania and Colorado and Virginia many miners were shot down because they

dared to demand a comfortable home and decent food for their children.

The whole world was a hospital of sick and distorted souls, and Debs went about from place to place trying to heal them. Often he wished that his worn-out body could be multiplied a thousand times, so that he might be everywhere at once. For wherever he came, his gentle presence was like oil upon troubled waters. When he stood up to speak, everybody forgot to look upon his wrinkled old face. They merely saw his eyes, — two suns that burned with a pure and steady flame. His was not the voice of an old man speaking to them from the edge of the grave. It was the voice of eternal youth singing an undying song of hope. The war had left the nations of the world in despair. It had killed in the heart of man the last trace of self respect. Men went about with their eyes upon the ground. They had lost their faith in human kindness. They no longer believed in themselves. They felt that all life was an idiotic drama written by an insane dramatist. They had made up their minds that the world was a jungle and that it was useless for anyone to try to be anything better than a beast.

But Debs once more took the world in his feeble

hands and reshaped it into a thing of beauty. The war had turned men into beasts, and Debs cast upon them the spell of his gentle words and turned them into men again.

But his work was nearly done. He had come to the end of the journey. He had used up the rich treasure of his health in behalf of his comrades, and now all his strength was gone. His body was a broken cage now, and the song-bird of his soul was ready to take its flight.

His friends saw the coming end and they urged him to save his strength as much as possible. He struggled against their advice as long as he could. But he broke under the strain at last. He was taken once more to the sanitarium. He knew now that the end was near, but he was not afraid. In spite of his terrific pain, he settled down calmly to watch the ebbing away of his life just as a lover of music listens to the last low strains of a dying song.

These last days were among the gentlest, the sweetest and the most courageous days of his life. As he lay on his bed and shut his eyes, he could see in his fancy the whole world passing by as if on parade. What a lot of lovable, silly children! How helpless they were, and how pitiable! They were like a mul-

titude of raindrops falling from the clouds. The winds drove them hither and thither. Often they were dashed one against the other and were shattered into fragments of moisture. Sometimes they wilfully jostled into other drops whom they thought to be in their way. As if all this jostling and all this struggling among the raindrops amounted to anything! What were they fighting about, these foolish mites of falling rain? Didn't they know that they had all come out of the same cloud, and that they would soon melt together into one infinite ocean?

He, too, had been one of these raindrops driven by the tempest of life. But the sun had fallen upon him from behind the edge of the cloud, and his heart had blossomed like a rainbow with the colors of an undying courage and an infinite love.

And now, having lived his life, he was descending at last to be mingled with the waters of the peaceful sea.

Hundreds of visitors came to the doors of the sanitarium, but they were turned away. For the doctors still hoped that if he were left alone in quiet he might get well again. But Debs was not the man to remain quiet when his brothers were in distress. And so, whenever the doctors left his room, he got out of

bed and attended to the other patients. They lay under their blankets like broken toys, and the touch of his hand brought new dreams of strength to them. A healing gentleness spread from his presence like a light wherever he went. He was in great pain himself most of the time, but this only increased his tenderness toward others, just as the perfume of a rose is increased when its petals have been crushed.

For a time it seemed as though he would recover from his illness. But one day, against the advice of his doctors, he left the sanitarium and went to visit a friend who lived nearby. On his return he stopped at the post office and made out a money order which he sent to the Sacco and Vanzetti Defense Committee. For even in his illness he didn't forget the two unfortunate Italian Anarchists whom the courts and the colleges of Massachusetts were sending to the electric chair without a fair trial.

He suffered a relapse as soon as he came back to the hospital. The doctors worked over him all night, and in the morning he rallied. But he knew that the end had come. From that day on, he was never able to leave his bed again.

He was in such great pain most of the time that he prayed for death. But death was in no hurry. And

sleep, too, the twin brother of death, refused to come to him during the last days of his illness. One night, however, he managed to doze off for a few hours. He felt greatly refreshed when he opened his eyes again. He looked through the window. The sky spread like a huge black tree above him. The stars were silver fruits that hung upon its branches. He was a boy again. To be sure, his hair was snow-white now, and his face was wrinkled like an old parchment. But he was a boy nevertheless. His heart was as young as ever. And now he was looking for the last time, perhaps, upon the friendly trees and the stars and the clouds and all the other playthings of his childhood.

They were reaching down to bid him good-bye. The stars sang to him. Strange how everything these days seemed to make a soft music in his ears! They were all crowding around his bed now. The night stooped down and kissed him with her soft black lips. The wind came in through the window and fanned his face. The moon brushed aside the darkness and made a path of light for him to walk upon. For death was already knocking upon the door, and he had a long and dark way to travel. . .

He felt better the next day. His pain was almost

entirely gone. He was eating his dinner, and laughing and joking with the nurse who was attending him. Suddenly, without any warning, a great weakness came upon him. The doctors hurried to his side, but they could do nothing for him now. Toward evening he went into a coma, and the doctors knew that the end had come.

They sent for his wife, his brother Theodore, and one of his sisters. The three spent the whole night at his bedside. The next morning he opened his eyes and smiled to them. But he could no longer speak. He motioned for a pencil and paper. They were brought to him. With the last flicker of life that remained in his fingers he traced upon the paper the immortal words of his life-long creed —

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate!
I am the captain of my soul!"

This was his dying message to the world. His spirit had remained unconquered to the last! . . .

And now, having written his final message, he was ready for the call. It came very shortly. A sweet drowsiness began to steal over him, and once more he fell into a deep coma.

He never came out of it again. For several days he slept on the soundless shores of the dark sea and then glided gently into its soothing waters. So quiet was his passing that those who watched him hardly knew the moment when the sleep of life had changed into the sleep of death.

29

Gene Debs is Dead. Long Live His Dream

It was the twentieth of October, 1926. The heroic life of Eugene Debs was over at last. But his dream lived on. His body was cremated, but his message of peace rose like an incense from the funeral pyre and continued its triumphant flight around the world. Wisdom fell like a soft dew from its outspread wings. It hovered over the nations and brought a new music to their ears. Here and there a number of statesmen heard the music of this new song of peace, and a great light came into their hearts. Everywhere the leaders of men threw off their masks of hatred and began to devise new laws to keep the nations at peace. In America a small group of senators resolved to outlaw war as a crime. In Russia a member of the Communist government invited all the civilized nations of the world to disarm. "Let us destroy our guns and our battleships," he said, "and let us take our military uniforms and

our medals and our swords and cast them away from our sight. It is high time for us to stop playing with these toys of hatred and destruction. Let us once for all cease to be savage children and begin to act like civilized men!"

And, strangely enough, the world began to listen to these peacemakers, not with derision, as in the past, but with a solemn determination to put an end to the criminal nonsense of war as speedily as possible.

For the words of the saviors of the world are like pebbles of wisdom dropped into the ocean of life. Quietly at first, with hardly any splash, they fall into the depths, but the ripples that they put into motion keep on spreading, in wider and ever wider circles, until at last the whole world is ready to hear them and understand.

When Eugene Debs first spoke his golden words of peace, most men turned away from him in contempt. For their ears were as yet attuned to the savage discords of war. Like a Pied Piper he came into the world to rid it of its pest of injustice and bloodshed. But the stupid burghers of his nation, like the burghers of Hamelin town, paid him with sticks and stones for his trouble. He brought them a precious

dream, and in return they gave him a convict's stripes.

But here and there they heard him and paid heed to his words. And, above all, the children heard him. For children are always ready to hear and to follow the Pied Pipers who sing to them of newer and better worlds. When Debs was in prison, hundreds of loving messages came to him from the children of America. I have been able, through the kindness of Gene's brother, Theodore Debs, to examine a good many of these letters. I wish I could copy them all here, with their quaint crude handwritings and their lovable childish errors in spelling and in punctuation and in grammatical construction. But that would make a book in itself. And a mighty interesting book, too. Some of these letters are written on stationery with quaint little pictures on top. Pictures of beetles dressed in spectacles, or of robins wearing straw hats on their heads and carrying green umbrellas under their wings. But the letters themselves are pictures of the innermost souls of America's children. Their beloved Pied Piper is in prison. His voice has been silenced. But the children have heard the call, and now from every part of the country they are raising their little voices in reply. Their speech is still crude

and halting. They have not as yet learned to express themselves. "I say so little," writes a lovable child of nine, "but I mean so much." Another child, a brave little fellow of twelve, writes, "Dear old comrade, never think that the prison bars can keep out our love and esteem for you." A young lady philosopher of thirteen, who feels ever so much older than the grown-ups who are persecuting Debs, writes to him, "I think the children will be wiser than the people today. They certainly should be, if they appreciated your staying in prison for their freedom." One little comrade, with the soul of an artist, draws a picture of a prison gate. On either side of the gate he shows a host of men and women, with bouquets of red flowers in their hands. A blue-bird stands perched on top of the gate. They are all waiting for Debs to be released from prison. "Tweet, tweet," cries the blue-bird, "hope to see you soon!" And underneath the picture the little artist has written the following words all the way across the page: "First of May, Here Comes Debs!"

And not only did the children write letters to Debs, but a number of them even sent petitions to Harding to set Debs free. "Dear Mr. President," writes one of Harding's "fellow-citizens," as he calls

himself, a gallant little crusader of twelve, — "As you remember, Mr. President, Eugene Debs and other people were put in prison for saying what was right about the war. . . Wilson didn't free them because he was angry at them. But this hasn't made Debs angry at him because he is a very kind and generous man. He loves children. . . The children love him for his kind heart. . . Let him see the world once more before his own eyesight. . . What would you like to have? An unhappy nation to govern, or a happy nation to govern? If so, free those political prisoners from their cells and don't make the people angry."

These letters were written in 1920 and in 1921. The children of those days are almost full-grown now. They are about to take possession of the world. The old drivers of the chariot of life have finished their course. And a very savage course it was. For it was filled with hatred and envy and injustice and war. Let the young charioteers now show the new way to the world, — the way of justice and peace and love. It is a hard way to go, and an untried way, and their parents have done little enough, heaven knows, to clear the path for them. But Eugene Debs has gone that way. And what he has done, we can all

do. If the grown-ups are too timid to lead, then let the children do it, and the grown-ups will follow. When the dreamers of great dreams and the Pied Pipers who sing the sweetest songs come into the world, it is always the children who are the first to take heed. Two thousand years ago one of these Pied Pipers sang a song of peace and tried to lead his brothers into the kingdom of heaven. But his brothers paid no attention to him. And then he turned to the children, for to the Pied Pipers of the world every child is a sweet and holy thing. "Come to me, little children," he said, "and I will take you into the kingdom of heaven."

And then, within our own life-time, there came another Pied Piper, Eugene Debs. He, too, was rejected by the grown-up burghers of the world. He, too, then turned to the little ones. But his song was somewhat different. He did not say to the children, "I will take you out of this world and into the kingdom of heaven." Instead, he said, "Come, and I will show you how to build the kingdom of heaven *right here on earth.*"

And now that Eugene Debs is gone, will the children heed the call?

THE END

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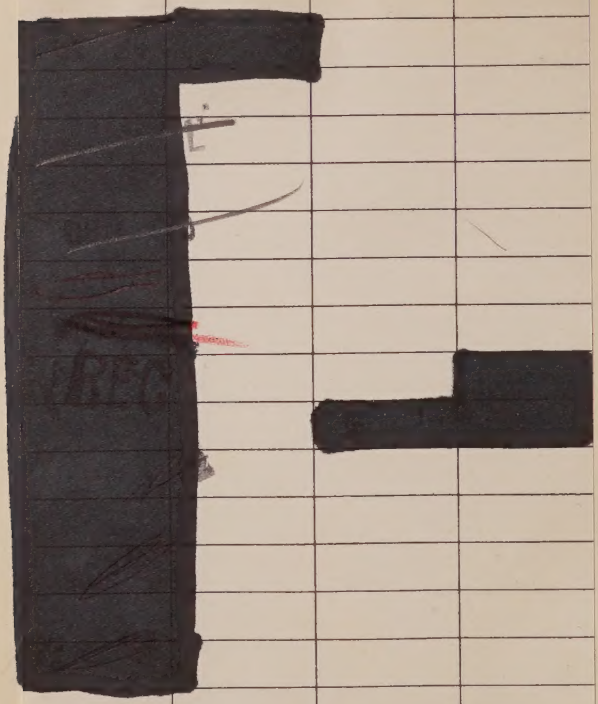

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